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ANNEX

Lines

1776



LIVES  
OF  
THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

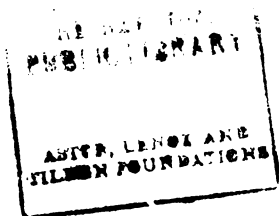
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**St. Gilbert,**  
PRIOR OF SEMPRINGHAM.

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MANSUETI HÆREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN  
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

NEW YORK  
BURLINGTON  
LONDON  
JAMES TOOVEY, 192, PICCADILLY.  
1844.  
M





S. GILBERT

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21

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE substance of the following pages is taken from the life of St. Gilbert, published in the recent Edition of Dugdale's Monasticon, from a manuscript in the British Museum. The name of the author is unknown ; it appears however incidentally that he was of the order of Sempringham, and knew St. Gilbert personally in his last days. Portions of the life have been put together from contemporary sources, as, for instance, the well known story of the nuns of Watton, taken from St. Aelred's narrative published in Twysden's Collection. On that story itself, it may be well to say a few words. The time is now past, when it was necessary to prove that monasteries were not nests of wickedness. Indeed it is high time that it should be so, for to any one who looks into the evidence for such an assertion, it is wonderful that it should ever have been made. The case is made out simply by *raking together* all the isolated facts, related by

historians from the fourth century to the Reformation, and bringing them to bear against monastic institutions, without distinction of order, age or country. In one popular book, for instance, the customs of Catholic monks and Manichæan heretics, of monks in their first fervour, and of Orders in a relaxed state, are put side by side. There we may learn that monks were in the habit of fasting on Sundays, of neglecting the fasts of the church, and of abstaining from meat, because the Creation was evil ;<sup>1</sup> and all this, because the council of Gangra condemned certain heretics for such malpractices. What would be said if the same sort of evidence was applied to any other history ? No one denies that at some periods monasteries required reform, that is, that in the intervals of their long services, monks conversed together instead of keeping silence and employing themselves in manual labour or study ; nay, that in process of time, and in some monasteries, instances of flagrant wickedness might be found. But the unfairness of heaping all instances together, without attempting to classify or arrange them historically, will be evident to any one who thinks at all seriously on the subject. And indeed so materially have old prejudices been weakened within the last few years, that few persons will be found who consider such stories, as the

<sup>1</sup> Fosbroke, *British Monachism*, c. 2. p. 11.

one above mentioned, to be really specimens of the age in which they occurred. Still, however, as they ever leave vague and indefinite suspicions upon the mind, it may be well to quote a sentence from the very work to which we have alluded, as especially unfair to the monastic orders. In Fosbroke's *British Monachism*, the following passage occurs: "It is singular that notwithstanding the story of the poor nun in Alfred of Revesby and Bale, Nigel Wireker says nothing of this order but what observation of the rule implies; but it was yet young when he wrote."<sup>1</sup> This Nigel was a satirist, who details in verse the faults of the monastic orders of his day. Cave makes him to have flourished about the year 1200, full seventy years after the first institution of the Nuns of Sempringham.

It only remains to add that in writing the following pages, use has been made of a manuscript life of St. Gilbert, kindly lent by its author, William Lockhart, Esq., now a brother of the Institute of Charity established at Loughborough.

<sup>1</sup> Fosbroke, *British Monachism*, c. 6. p. 78.

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LIFE OF

## St. Gilbert,

PRIOR OF SEMPRINGHAM, CIRC. A. D. 1085-1189.

### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTION.

IT was a sad and dreary time for England when first Norman William mounted the throne which he inherited from the blameless Edward. The nobles were wandering about among the woods and forests of the land, and living like robbers among the impassable marshes of the country ; while Edgar, England's darling, was an exile in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> Her pleasant homes were turned into military fastnesses, for each man fortified his dwelling ; and as he closed door and window at night, the head of the family said Benedicite, and the household responded Dominus, not knowing whether their homestead might not be burned over their heads at night.<sup>2</sup> Who can tell the horrors inflicted on those of English blood by Odo, the bishop of Bayeux, and William Fitz-Osborne ?<sup>3</sup> Noble English virgins and matrons were the victims of the brutal Norman sol-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. Paris, 1001.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. Paris, p. 999.

<sup>3</sup> Orderic 507-523.

his successors. He seems to have had a quick perception of character ; and, with the same acuteness by which on his death he foretold that his wily Henry would outstrip his brethren, he fixed upon great churchmen to rule the English sees. It was perhaps fortunate for the Conqueror that his interest coincided with his duty, but it is true that the English church was very much improved by the conquest. It may be that he was desirous of weakening the native courts, and breaking up the old organization which kept up an English feeling ;<sup>1</sup> but however this be, he certainly gave a great boon to the church when he restored her internal jurisdiction instead of subjecting her to the civil tribunal of the Hundred courts. Whatever motives influenced him to remove the Saxon Abbots from Saxon monasteries, it is certain that generally religious houses flourished under the Norman successors whom he appointed. The Saxon clergy were too often in a state of rude ignorance and jovial indulgence. The great Abbey of Abingdon was well rid of its abbot, Sparhafoc, the cunning craftsman, who absconded with the gold with which he had been intrusted to make a new crown for the Confessor.<sup>2</sup> A general reform took place throughout England on the model of St. Alban's, which became a school of holy discipline under Paul its first Norman abbot. The poor monks may have grumbled at his uncouth Norman fish-pie,<sup>3</sup> which he introduced into the infirmary instead of the savoury meat, which was too apt to invite the brethren to put themselves on the sick list ; but they could not help acknowledging the vast advancement of religion under

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins' Concilia, i. 368.

<sup>2</sup> Palgrave's Anglo-Saxon Constitution, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. Paris, vit. Abb. St. Alb.

his rule. The fine old Saxon character was every where greatly impaired, and no where more so than in the church ; a set of hunting and hawking abbots, men who loved hippocras and mead sat in the seat of the ancient saints of the land. On the whole, Abbot Paul may not have been far wrong when he looked down on his predecessors, though of the noblest blood in England, as somewhat thick-witted and ignorant. An intellectual and active element was introduced into the English church which it had not before ; and though the Saxon historian declares that England took no part in the dispute between Pope and Antipope, yet William, by his appointment of Lanfranc, prepared the way for breaking down the mischievous nationality which, even more than our tossing sea, was beginning to cut us off from the rest of Christendom.<sup>1</sup>

All these however are but the bright parts in a dark picture ; the sins of Saxon England were to be punished, and tremendous was the amount of physical suffering which the poor country had to endure. The fusion between the rival races could only be effected by a red hot furnace of suffering. Such was the hatred which existed between them, that even the ties of religion failed at first to bind them together. When for instance a Norman abbot came with his Norman chants to Glastonbury, the monks rebelled, and declared that they would not change their beloved Gregorian tones ; then abbot Turstin introduced an armed band into the church, and two monks were slain, one at the very altar, the other at its foot. The monks defended themselves as they best could with the forms, and candlesticks of the choir, at last the monk's frock got the better of the coat of mail, and the soldiers were driven

<sup>1</sup> *Matt. Paris, ubi sup.*

out, but not till the church had been stained with blood, and the crucifixes and images of the Saints transfixed with arrows.<sup>1</sup> In St. Alban's too, Abbot Frederic was the head of the Saxon interest in the south of England, and the two hostile parties lasted in the abbey, through the time of the next abbot up to the election of his successor. If these quarrels raged in the sanctuary itself, it is easy to imagine that the world without was not in a state of peace.<sup>2</sup> There was again another cause which increased the sufferings of poor England, as well under the reign of the Conqueror as of his successors ; and this was the quarrel of the Norman barons with their kings. In France feudalism was much more systematized than in England. William, when in Normandy, was but the head of a feudal state, the first among his peers.<sup>3</sup> He asked leave of his barons before he invaded England, and when the field of Hastings had been won, and William fairly seated on his throne, the Norman nobles began to think that their work was done, and returned home to their manors in Normandy. William saw that he could not count on a feudal army, and henceforth employed mercenaries.<sup>4</sup> When his authority was strengthened in England he was much more absolute across the channel than on the continent. He held his English crown by a very different tenure from that by which he wore his ducal coronet in Normandy. There he was a feudal baron of the king of France, but England he held by right of conquest ; and this told even more on his own followers than on the English. To the Sax-

<sup>1</sup> Simeon Dunelm, in ann. 1082.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. Paris, vitæ, abb. St. Alb. 1005.      <sup>3</sup> Orderic, 493.

<sup>4</sup> Orderic, 512.

ons he was the representative of Edward the Confessor, whose laws he had sworn to observe, but the Normans who followed him to England, when once on English soil, lost their Norman, without distinctly acquiring Saxon rights. Hence the feudal system was at first much less defined in England than in France ; and hence the bloody wars which the English kings had to wage against their nobles. Bitterly do the barons complain of the Red King at Henry's accession, and fairly does the monarch promise improvement ; but the wily Beauclerc only waits his time till he feels his throne firm beneath him. It is true that these quarrels made the English necessary to their Norman monarchs ; loyally did they serve the Conqueror on the continent, and Normandy saw her fair fields ravaged by her own Duke, leading a Saxon army. Again his son William owed his throne to his Saxon subjects, who, by the persuasion of their archbishop Lanfranc, assisted him against his disaffected barons. Ultimately the English gained by it, but during this period of transition they were miserably ground down between the opposing parties. Neither king nor baron cared much for the poor Saxon, and Magna Charta has much more about baronial than about popular rights.

Alas ! for England in this dreadful time. All countries have had their day of probation, but few have passed through such a fiery trial as our own. Scarcely had England recovered from the Dane, when the Norman came, and Dane-land, March-land, and Saxon-land, with the remnants of the old Cymri, in Cumbria, all alike felt his yoke ; and if it was an iron yoke under the Conqueror, what was it under his successors ? The Conqueror had a rough justice of his own,

his long arm reached from one end of England to the other, and he knew every hide of land within it ; he even several times endeavoured to learn the language of his new subjects, that he might judge their complaints himself, and would have done so, if he had not been too old to begin grammar anew.<sup>1</sup> But under the reign of his foul successor, "riot was the rule" of England. He was a man almost ludicrous in his knavish wickedness, who blasphemed and robbed with a jest, and grinned over his captive when he had him in his power.<sup>2</sup> He introduced into England a class of men even worse than the robber-soldier ; his companions were effeminate youths, stained with terrible crimes ; and far worse were they in their silken robes and long hair, parted in the middle, like that of women, and their feet clad in peaked shoes of fantastic shape, than the lawless soldier, with his conical cap of iron, and his corslet of steel rings, albeit he ruthlessly wasted the stock of the husbandman. The foul lust of this man cried aloud to heaven for vengeance, and before he fell like a beast of the field, in the New Forest, men felt a strange presentiment that the wrath of God was coming upon him, and holy monks, even in their dreams, prayed to our Lord ; O Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of mankind, for whom Thou hast shed Thy precious blood on the cross, look in mercy upon Thy people, groaning in misery, under the yoke of William.

Our blessed Lord, however, did not leave his people without consolation in this dreadful time ; the Church was still up in arms against the world ; though a contest was going on in her own bosom, and such a man as Ralph Flambard sat on the throne of Durham, yet

<sup>1</sup> Orderic, 520.

<sup>2</sup> Will. Malms. Gesta Reg. lib. 4.

she had inexhaustible resources in the Saints whom the Lord raised up within her. St. Anselm was a match for the Red King, with all his satellites, whether soldiers or prelates. Even his father, inflexible as he was, was foiled by the crosier of St. Wulstan ; and the simple monk, Guitmund, refused to hold either bishopric or abbacy in England, bidding the king beware lest the fate of unjust conquerors should await him ; and so he left him, and went back across the sea to his quiet monastery of St. Leuffroy of the Cross, in Normandy, a monk as poor as he came. So also, at the time when foul and lawless wickedness was raging in England, under William Rufus, the Lord was nurturing in secret in His church, a man to whose angelic purity it was afterwards given to create the only wholly English order, one destined to provide a refuge for holy virgins from the snares of the world ; and it is the life of this man that, by God's blessing, we hope now to show truthfully to the reader.

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*Gilbert in the Schools.*

It was about the close of the reign of our first William, that Gilbert was born, though the exact year is not known.<sup>1</sup> His father, Sir Joceline, was a Norman knight, and a good soldier, whose services had been rewarded by many gifts of land in Lincolnshire, and especially with the lordship of Sempringham in that county. He was probably one of the vavassors, or inferior nobility

<sup>1</sup> He was above a hundred years old when he died, in 1189.

of the realm.<sup>1</sup> His mother was a Saxon lady, the daughter of a Thane, and of the same rank as her husband. He is thus an early instance of the blending of Norman and Saxon blood, and though, as will be seen by and bye, his character partook more of the homeliness of his mother's race, yet certain adventurous journeyings on the Continent, showed that he had also some of the spirit of his kinsmen, who went forth from home to gain England, the south of Italy and Sicily. But little is known of his parents, and they soon disappear from the history, so that they most probably died before he had attained the age of manhood. All that appears from his chronicler is, that they lived on their estate, "in the midst of their people." A little before his birth, it is said that his mother dreamt that the moon had come down from the sky, to rest upon her bosom ; and his fanciful disciple sees in it a pre-sage that his childhood, pale, wan, and sickly as the crescent of the new moon, was destined by the grace

<sup>1</sup> The Bollandists have conjectured that Gilbert was connected with Gilbert de Gant, a great baron who came over with William the Conqueror, whose wife's cousin he was. They, however, have no reason to give for their opinion, except that he was called Gilbert, and that the family of Ghent, or Gant, held the barony of Folkingham, near Sempringham. It will afterwards appear, that Joceline was not a tenant *in capite*, and therefore not one of the great nobility of the realm, and that he held the lands of Sempringham of this very Gilbert. He is here called *miles*, and not *comes*, and it is observable that in one place, the Latin life of Gilbert in Dugdale, says, that Gilbert was "*de plebe electus*."—Vit. S. Gil. ap. Mon. Angl. vol. 6, p. 2, p. 14. The Conqueror was not by any means particular as to the nobility of the men whom he employed, nor, indeed, were his successors, as his son Henry, who is said to have been *fond of low company*.

of the Sun of righteousness, to expand into a full orb of brightness. At all events, it is certain that, as a child, he was no favourite with those about him. His recollections of childhood, as he used afterwards, in extreme old age, to tell his canons, were very painful. He was puny, plain, and shy ; his father saw in him no qualities, either of mind or body, to make a soldier. He was therefore, "by divine providence, in his tender age," destined to be a clerk ; had it not been for his childish ailments, he might have been all his days a thick-witted baron, spending all his time in the saddle, with harness on his back. Even here, however, he did not seem at first to have found his element ; like most children, he disliked his book, and for a long time he seems to have been allowed to run wild as he would. His features were plain, and nothing is said in his history about his mother's love. He was looked upon as half an idiot, and he used to tell of himself that the very servants would hardly sit at table with him, so much was he neglected and despised. Thus did God shield him from the deceitfulness of riches, for it is expressly said that his father was a rich man. He was nursed up in the school of poverty and humiliation, and the shadow cast from his sickly and unamiable childhood rested upon him throughout his life, tempering the burning heat of prosperity.

As is often the case with dull children, the reproaches of his friends, or the natural expansion of his mind, produced a sudden re-action, and he began to apply himself to study. His parents seeing him take this turn, determined to send him to Paris :<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He is said to have gone in Gallias, which probably implies Paris. It could *not* be Normandy, for which the author of

thither then in early youth he went, as to the principal seat of learning in Europe. Our own Oxford, though more ancient as a seat of learning than Paris, had not yet attained its subsequent celebrity. It was a strong and fair city, with its castle rising high in the midst of the streams which all but surrounded it,<sup>1</sup> but it was then rather too warlike to be a great seat of learning, and had to stand many a siege before it attained to its eminence. Nor, indeed, was Oxford ever the intellectual centre of *Europe*, as was Paris; as the archbishop of Canterbury was "the Pope of the farther world," so had Oxford a world of its own, with intellects as active and as penetrating as any which ruled the schools on the continent. But Paris had, even in Gilbert's time, its four nations, one of which included even the far east.<sup>2</sup> To Paris then, and not to Oxford, came Gilbert; and he might, had it pleased him, have found food enough for his curiosity, for the quarrels between Realists and Nominalists had begun already to be heard in the schools of Paris. Roscelinus, the opponent of St. Anselm, had taught in Paris; and there was a person then in France whose name has spread wider than that of the heretical head of the Nominalists. Peter Abelard was still a young man, though probably about ten years older than Gilbert. The career of the two youths was, however, to be very different; the terms of the schools are banished from the life of Gilbert; it is not known who was his master, whether Bernard of Chartres, or William of Champeaux, or Abelard himself. Not but that he was, in after times, a distinguished

Gilbert's life uses Neustria. John of Salisbury, when he relates his going abroad to study, says that he went in Gallias, and it only appears incidentally that he means Paris.—*Metalog.* i. 10.

<sup>1</sup> *Gesta Stephani.* p. 958.

<sup>2</sup> *Bulæus*, vol. ii. 666.

teacher in England, but it was not God's will that intellect should be the most prominent part of his character. All that is said of his studies at the school of Paris is, that he made up by his diligence for the waste of his early years, and "received an abundant talent of learning." But it proved to be a good school of discipline for him, and a marked change took place in his character; he had to struggle with poverty, for his father, notwithstanding all his riches, gave but a poor maintenance to the son who had disappointed him. Again, amidst all the dangers which surrounded him, by a severe purity, he offered up his body as a sacrifice to the Lord, and thus the grace of God trained him for that work which he was destined to perform in the Church.

It is not known how long he remained at Paris, but he came back to England with the degree of master and license to teach.<sup>1</sup> He was not of those who remained on the mountain of St. Genevieve, disputing over and over again on the old questions, who were to be found by their friends after many a long year not a whit advanced from the point where they started. Nor did he repair, as did many scholars in those days to Salerno, to exercise afterwards the more profitable art of medicine. Nor again did he seek the courts of king or prelate to make his fortune. He did not even seek the cloister, much less there, as saith the<sup>2</sup> quiet satirist of the schools, carry his proud heart under the hood of St. Benedict and exempt himself from conventual discipline, by keeping his old profession. He went back to England, to his old home in his father's house, and opened a school, or, to give him his proper title, he became a regent master.

<sup>1</sup> *John of Salisbury*, ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Metalog. i. 4.

At this time, a schoolmaster was a man of great importance; his person was as inviolable as that of a clerk,<sup>1</sup> and he was considered as a half ecclesiastical personage. This office was a passport to the favour of kings and to ecclesiastical dignity. Two rulers of the schools of Bec, at this time successively sat on the throne of Canterbury; Geoffrey, the schoolmaster of St. Katherine's, became Abbot of St. Alban's, where a<sup>2</sup> large library had lately been laid up in the painted cupboards by Paul, the first Norman Abbot, and a whole manor set apart for its maintenance. The education of the country was then carried on by the old schools which had been connected with the monasteries and the cathedrals and other churches.<sup>3</sup> No one could teach without a license, and this was to be obtained from any master who himself was the ruler of a school.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes a secular ruled the school of the monks, and a monk might rule a secular school,<sup>5</sup> but all were under the control and patronage of the church, as the decrees for their protection testify, and it was considered almost simony to exact money for a

<sup>1</sup> Laws of Edw. the Conf. ap Wilkins, vol. 1. p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. Paris, pp. 1007 and 1036.

<sup>3</sup> The decree of the council of Lateran, mentions other churches besides the cathedrals. Saxon cathedral schools are mentioned at the end of the tenth century.—Wilkins i. 265.

<sup>4</sup> It does not seem that at first any master whatever could give a license, at least in France, for it seems likely from a rescript of Alexander III., that the masters of the cathedral schools claimed the privilege of granting licenses, and the cause mentioned by John of Salisbury, letter 19, implies a monopoly within a certain district. The chancellor of the university of Paris is expressly allowed by Alexander to exact a fee, which also seems to give him a monopoly.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. Par. pp. 1007, 1039. St. Anselm, Ep. i. 30.

presentation to a school, and no one could even let his school to another master. The universities were continually sending forth masters, who set up unendowed schools for themselves ; and the church soon after this, in Pope Alexander III's. time, strengthened the hands of the old schools, by ordaining that each cathedral chapter should set apart a benefice for the master of the school, "because the church of God, as a pious mother, is bound to provide for the poor, lest the opportunity of reading and improving themselves be taken away from them." At the same time, the same pope<sup>1</sup> encourages to the utmost the establishment of new schools, where the masters would necessarily be paid by the scholars, by forbidding under an anathema any cathedral dignitary from exacting money for a license, from any one who wished to set up a school, provided he were only competent.

Such was the situation in which Gilbert was now placed ; he had found his way back to the home of his youth, where he had lived neglected and despised, but he was now a much more important person than when he left it, and was considered by his father as a degenerate son. Now the whole country round, from a great distance, came to hear the new doctor from Paris. Not only boys were put under his charge and young men became his hearers, but girls and maidens also came to be instructed by him. Females were not behindhand in the intellectual enthusiasm of the period. Learning was a romantic quest, an unknown land, in which even females might go forth and make discoveries. The well known Heloise

<sup>1</sup> Council of London A. D. 1138.

<sup>2</sup> Rescript p. 2. c. 18. ap. Mansi.

will occur to every body, and the daughters of Mane-gold a schoolman, celebrated in his day, taught philosophy to those of their own sex. Here then Gilbert found himself in a situation of great responsibility. The obscure township of Sempringham had suddenly, through his means, sprung up into an extensive school. His father no longer looked upon him as an unworthy scion, and found that he might be usefully and even honourably employed without breaking bones at tournaments, or hunting and hawking over his lands. He therefore, instead of leaving him to glean a precarious subsistence from his pupils, supported him out of his possessions, and this enabled Gilbert to assume an authority over his scholars, which he could not otherwise have maintained. He walked about in a dress becoming the son of the lord of Sempringham, but all the while he was in heart a monk, and he began immediately to form his pupils into an association, which might save them from the dangers to which their situation exposed them. Not content with teaching them the trivium and quadrivium, he became their spiritual guide, and subjected them to a species of monastic discipline. Knowing how a breath may spoil the beautiful innocence of childhood, and yet how easily holy discipline may shut out the knowledge of evil till the soul is strong enough to fight against it, he taught them to consecrate the whole day to God. The male children slept altogether in a dormitory, where all might be controlled ; he taught them reverence at church, and at certain times and places, a religious silence was observed, and they had stated times for study and prayer. He was now happier than he had ever been before, beloved and honoured in his own

and the guide of happy children and of a band of and maidens, who praised the Lord under his name.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *The Rectory.*

was not long however to enjoy this peace ; two churches were founded in his father's lands at Ningham and Tirington. It does not appear whether Sir Joceline was himself the founder of them, but events he conceived that the right of patronage belonged to him, and he nominated his son to the vacant churches. It was much against his will that he accepted the charge ; he knew that it would soon be disputed, and a lawsuit was of all things most opposed to his character. On the other hand, he thought it his duty to defend his father's rights, and the cause would come before an ecclesiastical tribunal under the cognizance of the bishop, he could have no scruple in accepting the benefice, if it were in his favour. A long lawsuit followed, as he had expected. If ever there was a system in confusion it was the parochial system of England at the Conquest. It had been introduced amongst us later than in any of the existing kingdoms in Europe, and traces existed even after the conquest of the old division of church property by the bishop himself among his clergy ; as for instance, and William of St. Carilefe, of Durham, were the first in their respective sees to separate the bishop's lands from those of the monks of the cathedral, who originally performed the functions

of the parish priests. Thus the parishes in England were in that most dangerous of states, a state of transition ; at first, matters are generally clear and simple, and then comes an intermediate state, when questions arise and everything is vague and floating, till evils and abuses compel authority to step in. At first all was in the hands of the bishop, and then the nobleman must have a private chapel, or oratory, as it was called, and nothing was more natural than that he should appoint his own chaplain, subject to the bishop's approval. Afterwards, he began to find it too much to pay both chaplain and parish-priest, and a law was necessary to force him to pay tithe to the mother church.<sup>1</sup> Out of these chapels often arose parish churches where there were none, and so the chapelry became a benefice, and the nobleman the patron. Or else the lord of a manor founded or endowed a church, and then the grateful church gave him the patronage, which became hereditary in his family or attached to the land. But a far different sort of patronage soon sprung up ; church property was too tempting, and lay too much at the mercy of a strong hand, not to be exposed to the rapacity of an unscrupulous noble. The defenceless church was ever a convenient fund whence earl and baron drew money, whether a fortification was to be constructed, or a body of armed men fitted out.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes a portion of the church lands were made over on a long lease to some powerful baron, who, with his good sword, was to clear them of a nest of robbers, lurking in the woods, or to defend the church in times of danger.<sup>3</sup> These lands but too often never came back to

<sup>1</sup> *Leges Eccl. Canuti. Wilkins Concil. p. 302.*

<sup>2</sup> *III. Lat. council, canon 19.*

<sup>3</sup> *Matt. Paris, 998.*

the church. In other cases some benefactor or his descendant repented of his or his ancestor's liberality, and resumed what had been solemnly given over to the service of God. In the time of the Danes almost all the parish churches north of the Thames<sup>1</sup> had been destroyed, and when the foot-prints of the invader had passed away, the nobles took possession of the lands and kept them in their own hands. Church lands were thus passed on from father to son, like any other manor belonging to the lord, and were given as a dowry on the marriage of a daughter, and of course the right of presentation passed on with the possession.<sup>2</sup> A miserable pittance out of the tithes and produce was paid to some priest who was appointed to serve the church, and the rest belonged to the lord. The clergy themselves were by no means exempt from blame; the servile chaplain would come into the lord and lady's chamber and profane the most holy mysteries by saying mass to them in their bed. Sometimes the clergy themselves were the spoilers of the church; most of the Saxon priests were married, and livings often became a family inheritance, enjoyed in a direct line by the son after the father. Even in later times, in Normandy, mere children were sometimes put in possession of ecclesiastical benefices.<sup>3</sup> The right of presentation was sold like any other right belonging to the land, and that with the connivance of bishops.<sup>4</sup> Such was the miserable state of England before the conquest, and the very improvement of affairs brought with it its own

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave's Anglo-Saxon Const. p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> For an instance of the advocatio or presentation passing on with an unjust possession, v. Matt. of Paris, p. 1016.

<sup>3</sup> Council of Avranches, 1172.

<sup>4</sup> John of Salisbury, de Nug. Cur. 7. 17.

troubles. Parish churches sprung up every where,<sup>1</sup> and men, women, and children, might often be seen winding up the little pathway through the fields, to the sound of the merry bells, where never church had been before. But then first, the rights of the old parish were to be respected, and it was ordered that on some high festival, the priests of the new churches should go every year in procession, with cross and banner, to the mother church. Again, the rights of patrons were to be settled ; and it is said, that in England and Sweden these matters were in greater confusion than any where else. Certain it is, that when, in the third Lateran council, the church stepped in to settle the law of patronage, more rescripts on the subject were addressed by Pope Alexander III. to England, than to any other country.

It is not surprising then, that Sir Joceline of Sempringham should have had a lawsuit about the right of patronage. Even in those turbulent days men had recourse to law as well as now ; and quibbles too about seals and charters were common, as when the Lincoln men objected to the Abbot of St. Alban's that the charters of the abbey had no seal,<sup>2</sup> and it was answered that in good king Offa's time, a golden cross was used instead of the pendant seal which the Confessor introduced. It does not however appear, what was the objection made to Gilbert's father. It appears likely from the terms used by Gilbert when he instituted the priory, that the church lands belonged to him not only as rector, but as lord of the manor, inherited from his father, and this may have been the grounds on which

<sup>1</sup> *Leges Regis Edwardi ap. Wilkins.*

<sup>2</sup> *Matt. Paris, 1026.*

his father's right was questioned. A change had taken place in Sempringham since the Domesday survey, for it was now in the hundred of Alveton, and belonged to Gilbert of Ghent, who held it free of taxes of the king, which does not seem to have been the case at the time when the survey was taken. Of this nobleman, Sir Joceline held it as the mesne lord,<sup>1</sup> and it may be that it was doubted whether the presentation belonged to him or to Gilbert of Ghent.<sup>2</sup> Or else, it may be, that the title of these new comers to the lands themselves appeared to be rather of might than right. However this be, the lawsuit was decided in Gilbert's favour, and he was accordingly canonically instituted by the bishop of Lincoln, as rector of the parishes of Sempringham and Tirington. He was not in orders at the time when he became possessed of these livings; he therefore appointed a chaplain to serve the church in his room, and there was nothing irregular in this proceeding, for a license was allowed to students to hold ecclesiastical benefices without being as yet ordained.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This appears from the fact, that Gilbert of Ghent gave the land to St. Gilbert to found his priory, and is said in the charter to have been a tenant *in capite*. The dominium of the land, is said indeed to have belonged to Sir Joceline, but it appears that "domain" was applied to the manor of a mesne lord, v. Ellis's Index to Domesday, i. 230. The under-tenants of a nobleman were sometimes called barones.—Orderic, p. 589.

<sup>2</sup> A somewhat similar cause is decided in a rescript of Alexander III. in which it appears that a controversy had arisen between the nunnery of Wilton, and a knight who had a lease of a part of the lands, concerning the right of presentation to a church situated on the land.

<sup>3</sup> In rescript of Alexander III. p. xv. c. l., non-residence is allowed *studio literarum*. As late as council of Rouen, 1231, the alternative is allowed to clerks possessing benefices, either

It was a beautiful sight, the parish of Sempringham under the rule of its youthful rector. His was a gentle rule, for he was himself under obedience, and such men are ever calm and disciplined in their manners, and meek in heart. He subjected himself in all things to his chaplain, who was his confessor and spiritual guide. Being master of the school, the education of his parishioners came naturally under his controul, and he catechised and taught them with unwearied diligence. He taught them the holy mysteries of religion through the external rites of the church ; he knew well how the sweet service of the church soothes and softens down the rough hearts of rustics ; he taught them early to reverence the house of God as the abode of angels, and above all the temple, on the altar of which was reserved the adorable sacrament. He humanized the minds of the simple peasantry by this teaching, and filled them with a religious awe, so that it is said that a parishioner of Sempringham could at once be known from any other by his reverential air on entering a church. At first he lived among his parishioners in the village itself of Sempringham. He, with his chaplain, had a lodging in the house where dwelt the father of a family<sup>1</sup> with his wife and children. The

of being ordained or betaking themselves to the study of theology. Vicarii or curates (otherwise called capellani) are recognized by Alexander III., and the rights of the rectors, to whom they were bound by oath, protected against them.—v. Rescripts, p xxxix. Even a lay-rector is protected against his curate, though he is ordered to be ordained. See also councils of Tours and of London, 1163, and 1175. A great laxity had been tolerated previous to the Lateran council, and Alexander allowed a person who had been instituted before the age of fifteen, to keep his benefice on that ground.—Rescript, p. xxiii. 5.

<sup>1</sup> *Paterfamilias*, the House-bonde.—v. Palgrave, p. 16.

chaplain must have found himself in a new situation, for it was not often that the poor Anglo-Saxon priest was thus treated by the lay-rector of the living ; and the son of the lord of the manor did not often abase himself to dwell in the house of the churl. Gilbert however found here more happiness than he had done in his father's hall ; he was now in his vocation winning souls to God, working among the poor of the earth. The daughter of the householder with whom he dwelt was a holy and devout maiden, whose modest graces endeared her to the hearts of all the villagers. She was Gilbert's scholar, and was growing up beneath his eye in simplicity and holiness. God however did not allow him to dwell long beneath this peaceful roof. One night he dreamed that he had laid his hand upon the maiden's bosom, and was prevented by some strange power from again withdrawing it. On awaking he trembled, for he feared lest God had warned him by this dream that he was on the verge of evil. He was utterly unconscious of the danger, but he revealed the temptation and the dream to his confessor, and asked him his opinion. The priest, in return, confessed that the same feeling had come over him ; the result was, that they resolved to quit the neighbourhood of what might become danger. Gilbert had never wittingly connected evil with the pure and holy being before him ; but his heart misgave him, and he went away. He knew that chastity was too bright and glorious a jewel to risk the loss of it ; no man may think himself secure ; an evil look or thought indulged in, have sometimes made the first all at once to become the last ; therefore the greatest saints have placed strictest guard upon the slightest thought, word, and action. *Even the spotless and ever-virgin Mary*

trembled when she saw the angel enter her chamber.<sup>1</sup> And He, who was infinitely more than sinless by grace, even by nature impeccable, because He was the Lord from heaven, He has allowed it to be recorded that his disciples wondered that he talked with a woman. All the actions of our blessed Lord are most real, for He had taken upon Himself the very reality of our flesh of the substance of the Virgin Mary ; but each action is also most highly significant and symbolical, so that, though all conduce to our great glory, yet all may be a warning to us in our greatest shame. Thus, though it would be unutterable blasphemy to connect with Him the possibility of sin, yet by this little act He has been graciously pleased to leave us an example, that as we should keep a dove-like purity of eye and thought, we should also, for the love of God, brave the scandal of evil tongues. And Gilbert imitated his blessed Lord, for though he fled from the very thought of danger, he still continued to guide her by his counsel ; she does not disappear from the history, and by and bye we shall see that the dream might have another meaning. After he left this house, he dwelt in a chamber constructed over the porch of the parish-church of St. Andrew, at Sempringham. He scarcely ever left this holy place, but was either occupied in prayer in the church itself, or teaching his school, or catechizing his parishioners. His scholars, though still seculars, continued to live all but as monks under his guidance ; and the care which he took in forming their minds and in ruling his parish, left him but little time to himself. He was not an idle ruler, nor did his sweetness of manner prevent his exertion of his authority wherever it was necessary. None know how

<sup>1</sup> St. Ambr. in Luc.

to be angry but those who can be angry with calmness, as our Lord when He made a whip of cords and drove out them that sold doves, and overturned the tables of the money-changers. On one occasion, one of his parishioners, when he had reaped his land, laid all the rich corn in his barn, without giving thanks to God, and separating the tenth part for the church. He was chuckling over his fraud, and thinking that the rector was much too simple to find it out, and much too spiritual to care for it, if he did. But he was mistaken, for not only did the rector find out the fraud, but he made him take all the corn out of his barn and count it before him sheaf by sheaf ; and then he collected together the tenth part, and heaping it up in the midst of the village, burnt it all in open day, in the sight of the wondering rustics. They then learned to know Gilbert better, and found, that though he cared but little about his own rights, he would not allow the church of God, which he represented, to lose a tittle of her dues.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### *The Bishop's Palace.*

A PARISIAN doctor was, however, too great a personage to be left in the little village of Sempringham ; he was not destined to remain long in peace with his scholars and parishioners. Robert Bloet, his diocesan, the bishop of Lincoln, sent for him, made him a clerk, by conferring on him one of the minor orders, and bade him live in his household. What sort of life he was likely to lead at this time, and why he was sent for, may be guessed at, because it is known what sort of a man *the bishop himself* was. It is to be hoped that he

was a sadder and a wiser man than he had been, when he sent for Gilbert. He had been chancellor of England under William Rufus, by whom he was made bishop of Lincoln, and under Henry I. High Justiciar ; he was a man whose exterior was formed to win all hearts, and whose eloquent tongue and talents for business had enabled him to gain the favour of the wild and stormy William, as well as the smooth and unscrupulous Henry. His career runs parallel with St. Anselm's, for both were appointed by William Rufus, in that good mood which sickness brought upon him, but the career of the two prelates soon separated. It would be needless to follow them ; suffice it to say that Robert found to his cost that it was easier to rule the Red King, when the wild fit was on him, than to escape the more dangerous anger of Henry. The king had been beaten by the saint, and probably loved not those ministers who had helped him to his defeat. He turned round on the bishop of Lincoln, and contrived to find a charge against him by which he was stripped of much of his wealth. Then when his knights were dismissed and his glittering train of noble pages gone, and his gold and silver vessels broken up, he looked round on his almost empty halls, on the shaven crowns and sober dresses of his clerks, and rough sheep-skin dresses of his serving-men, and burst into tears. Bitterly then must he have repented of his cowardice, when, with the other three bishops, he said to the bold Saint, that his holiness was above them, and that he must go on his way alone, for the love of kindred and of the world had wound round their hearts too tightly to allow them to follow.<sup>1</sup> Bitterly must he have wept over the time when he consecrated the abbots, who

<sup>1</sup> *Eadmer ap Anselm. ed. Beu. pp. 4, 7, 65.*

had received investiture from Henry's hand. It was at this time, probably, that he sent for Gilbert, that his gentle hand might soothe him in his desolation and penitence. The close of the prelate's busy life was at hand ; one day some one wished to comfort him by repeating some words of praise, with which the king had honoured him in his absence. But he knew the crafty king too well to trust him, and said with a sigh : the king praises none of his servants but those whom he would utterly smite down.<sup>1</sup> A few days after he went to Woodstock, where Henry was holding high festival with a number of nobles, and the curious beasts which he had collected from foreign lands ; as the prelate was walking with the king and the bishop of Salisbury, he fell down in a fit of apoplexy and never spoke more.

Gilbert's mission at the episcopal palace of Lincoln did not, however, stop here, and he had probably a harder part to play with Alexander, who succeeded to the bishopric, than with his broken-hearted predecessor. He was the nephew of the greatest prelate in England, that Roger of Salisbury, whom Henry I., when his fortunes were at the lowest, took into his service, as a poor priest, at Caen. Henry, when he became king of England, did not forget his old companion in poverty, and it was a fine thing to be the nephew of Roger, for he had at his disposal whatever he chose to ask for. Alexander was brought up in his palace, and unhappily imbibed a taste for splendour and for architecture. Had he stopped when he re-built his cathedral, and vaulted it with stone, it had been well ; but, unfortunately, he loved military architecture as well as

<sup>1</sup> *Henry of Huntingdon*, ap. Wharton. p. ii. p. 695.

ecclesiastical. At Newark, a stately castle was built by him on a hill, which stretched its green and flowery slope above the river Trent ;<sup>1</sup> at Sleaford and Banbury, two more castles kept watch over his extensive diocese. This might have been allowed during Henry's reign ; he would much rather have seen castles in the hands of his bishops than of the nobles, whom the policy of his whole reign tended to humble. He knew well that the lance was a much safer weapon in a bishop's hands, than the pastoral staff. Stephen, his successor, was not so politic ; kings loved to reduce their prelates to the state of feudal barons, but there was rather too much feudality in three good castles of stone, besides that of Devizes, said to be the finest of Europe, belonging to Alexander's uncle of Salisbury. He determined to take the castles into his own custody, and the bishops soon gave him an opportunity. They would ride about with armed retainers, and men with arms in their hands will quarrel, so when in 1139 they came to Oxford, to a council held by the king, the soldiers of the bishops fought with those of Alan of Brittany, about the lodgings assigned to their masters. Much blood was shed, and one soldier killed, but at last the bishops won the day, and the earl was beaten. Stephen seized upon this pretext, and bade the bishops give up their castles, as a hostage for their good behaviour. On their refusal, he seized the prelates, and kept them in custody. Soon after, he took Alexander with him to Newark, and, as he had done before to Roger, he declared that till the castle was surrendered, no food should pass the bishop's lips. With tears did Alexan-

<sup>1</sup> Vernantissimum florida compositione Henric. Huntin. lib. 8, p. 389.

der implore his own garrison to yield his fair castle, and with no less wretchedness, did he see the king's soldiers marching up the green slope, and entering the gate of his stronghold, and before he had turned his back upon it, the royal standard of England floated on its walls. The issue of the preceding contest, about investitures, had taught men that the office of the bishop was totally distinct from that of the temporal lord : as a lord, he might do homage, but the ring and the staff could not come from an earthly king. If, therefore, English prelates would now sink the bishop in the baron, they must pay the penalty. Stephen afterwards pleaded in council, that he had starved Roger, not as bishop, but as his own servant.

We have here somewhat anticipated the history, in order to show this Bishop's character ; Alexander was taught a severe lesson, and meddled no more with military matters. As, however, Gilbert had ceased to be an inmate in the bishop's palace before his misfortunes, he must have dwelt in the bishop's court at Lincoln, in the height of its magnificence. His eyes must have been dazzled with the glittering of burnished armour, mixing in the splendid pageant with the cope of the ecclesiastic, while the cross preceded the bishop and the lance brought up the rear ; his ears were bewildered with the clang of trumpets and the ringing of steel. What was he to do in the midst of such a court ? And yet, strange to say, he was in high favour with both Robert and Alexander. Evil is mixed up with good in Christ's church, like the cross, and the weapons of the world, in Alexander's retinue. Gilbert, going about this splendid house in his plain clerical apparel, was the representative of the cross. Such was his intimacy *with the bishop*, that he slept in the

same chamber with him. Where could have been his vigils and his fasts at the sumptuous tables and in the magnificent bedchamber of Alexander? He managed to contrive both; he said himself, with a reproachful tone, after he became a monk, that when he was in the bishop's palace he used to tame his flesh by more fasts, prayers, and spiritual exercises, than he ever could compass afterwards. Sometimes the inmates of the palace found that he was too good to suit them, as for instance, the clerk, who after once reciting the office with him, found that he lengthened the service so much by frequently bowing his knees to the ground, that, says Gilbert's biographer, "he swore that he would never pray with him again." One day a prelate came on a visit to the episcopal palace at Lincoln, and shared the chamber where the bishop, and Gilbert of Sempringham, slept. The strange bishop tossed upon his couch and could not sleep; his eye wandered about the darkened room, enlightened only by the glimmering of a taper. All on a sudden, he saw a shadow moving quickly up and down on the opposite wall. He gazed on it in fear for some time, but at last mustering courage, he rose and stealthily approached. He found to his surprise Gilbert awake and in prayer, sometimes standing, sometimes on his knees, raising his hands to heaven in earnest supplication. The bishop shrunk back to his couch, and next morning he smilingly accused his brother of Lincoln of having a mountebank in his room to dance to him at night. Strange is the approximation of good and evil in those days of faith; perhaps it was then more frequent than it is now, or rather from the greatness of the good the evil came out in greater contrast and in an exaggerated form. *Gilbert and Alexander of Lincoln lying side by side!*

And yet, stranger perhaps is the mixture of good and evil in the same heart. In the pages of history various personages float before us and appear as the types of certain principles ; yet, when by chance we can look upon them close, we find them not so bad. Thus Alexander to us is the mere worldly prelate ; he appears, as he was called in the Roman court, only as the magnificent Alexander. Yet there was a struggle in his heart too, and Gilbert was to him as his good angel. He insisted on his being ordained priest, and almost by force the awful power of the priesthood was conferred on Gilbert. The bishop's next step showed his just appreciation of his powers and turn of mind. The din of Nominalism and Realism had sounded about Gilbert in vain, without producing any impression ; abstract questions could not awaken his mind ; but put before him a case of conscience or of spiritual direction, he would grapple with it at once. The bishop accordingly made him, as far as we can make out the vague terms of his biographer, a sort of penitentiary<sup>1</sup> of the diocese. At times, Alexander himself, with all his worldliness, knelt at his feet in the confessional. A man who seeks a severe confessor, cannot be wholly bad, and though Gilbert, as we shall see, left him still in the midst of his grandeur, there is proof that in the day of adversity, he had not forgotten the church of St. Andrew at Sempringham, or its holy rector.

Gilbert's work now lay among the sins and wickednesses of mankind ; the worst and most horrid forms

<sup>1</sup> The first general institution of a penitentiary, was at the fourth Lateran council, 1215, but it appears from Thomassin, that particular dioceses in earlier times had their penitentiaries. *Vet. et. nov. disc. i. 2. c. 10.*

of sin came under his cognizance, for of this nature were those reserved for the jurisdiction of the bishop, whose representative he was. To him also the clergy of the diocese referred all cases of difficulty, which occurred in the practice of the confessional. This required both learning and experience ; instead of his little churches of Sempringham and Tirington, he had the whole diocese of Lincoln for his parish. To decide the cases which came before him, in his day, probably was more difficult than it would have been in the next century. He lived only on the verge of the age of systems. Canon law had not been compiled by Gratian ; no one had as yet professed it at Paris, nor had master Vacarius lectured at Oxford ;<sup>1</sup> appeals to Rome were but just in England taking the legal and precise form,<sup>2</sup> finally fixed by Alexander III. And yet canons are as old as the first council of Jerusalem, recorded in the Acts, and appeals to Rome have been since Athanasius threw himself and his cause on Pope Julius ; so too, the germs of casuistry existed in the old penitentials, though Christian morals had not yet been moulded into a science by St. Thomas. Gilbert had only the more difficult task to fulfil ; the tremendous power of the keys was chiefly delegated to him by the bishop, and he had so much the less to guide him in its exercise. What are the difficulties in casuistry, it is hard for those to tell to whom its existence is unknown. All appears smooth to him who hardly knows that he has a conscience, so little does he exercise it ; so also, the difficulties of the con-

<sup>1</sup> Gerv. Act. Pont. Cant. ap Twysden, p. 1665. Chron. Norm. ap Duchesne, p. 983.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. and Henr. Huntin. lib. viii. p. 226. Script. post. Bed.

fessional can only be known to him who is practised in it. Gilbert had to frame for himself, the rules of that art created by Christianity, which has sin for its subject matter, with all the sickening details of the wickedness of the human soul, that wonderful art which is founded on Christ's divine command, Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted. Christian morals has, from its very nobleness, many difficulties in practice ; this, however, is an imperfection incident to the highest human sciences, and their professors cannot consistently urge it as an objection against this one, which is divine. It has to do with subjects to which language is inadequate, and which thought can hardly compass, and yet it is a real science, which can be taken to pieces and viewed on all sides, and drawn out at length, and be systematized, and made consistent. It has its definitions and its axioms, its premises and its deductions. But though to define a venial sin may be easy, yet to tell it in practice from one that is mortal, may be difficult. The broken language of a penitent is hard to interpret ; and all the dark labyrinths of a wicked heart hard to disentangle. Cases are infinitely varied in practice, for the hideous forms of guilt are infinite, and many of them may come across theories, however clearly drawn out. If it be hard to tell how to rectify a complicated disease of the body, what must it be when, by external symptoms, men try to judge of the complex motives of a human heart, jostling and crossing each other in every direction ? Christianity, while it has exalted, has rendered the science of morals more complex. As Christ, on the mount, delivered a new code, so the Church has created new virtues and new crimes, possible only in Christianity, as, for instance, simony and heresy. This may help us to understand Gilbert's functions, all but

the highest that could be on earth. His eye had to look curiously into the putrid sores of the human soul, and his heart must have often sunk within him ; yet he had the power to cleanse them. He was a physician, as well as a judge. Truly it is the order of priesthood which makes Christian history to differ from Pagan. The history of Christendom is a terrible scene ; in reading its records of wholesale simony and petty jobbing, of bold crime and coward virtue, we are tempted to say, "in what respect is the world changed ?" But looking for a moment on Christian times, even with the cold eye of an historian, they have this remarkable difference from those which preceded them, that all through, there exists a body of men, the ministers of a kingdom, standing beside the kingdoms of the earth, with laws of its own, and resting entirely on invisible sanctions, the meanest of them claiming in his own sphere to be above an earthly king, and at whose feet kings may kneel. These men, again, are not an hereditary caste ; they are cut off from earthly ties ; they have only the usufruct of their property, and a stranger possesses it after them. These are the men who constitute Christianity, as far as it is a visible system ; take away the independence of its jurisdiction, and the power of its priests, to all external appearance at least, Christendom, is merged in the world. It was this compact system which Gilbert had now in a great measure to wield in the diocese of Lincoln, as the bishop's representative. This is priestcraft proper, and a gentle craft it is. It can keep the soul of the child pure from sin, or crush it in the bud ; preserve the young man chaste as a maiden, and heal the wounds in the soul of a hardened sinner.

## CHAPTER IV.

*The Nunnery.*

WHAT all this while has become of Gilbert's two parishes of Sempringham and Tirington ? Was his school broken up, and were his scholars dispersed ? His chronicler says nothing about it, but, as will appear in the sequel, he certainly kept up his communication with his favourite pupils. The whole of the revenues of Tirington he gave up, absolutely out of his hands ; and out of those of Sempringham, he took but what was really necessary, bestowing the rest entirely upon the poor. Though the bishop's command and the office which he held, must have taken away all scruple from his mind as to non-residence, still he was too poor in spirit to derive more from his benefice than the mere necessities of life. His heart was not at rest in Alexander's palace ; the baron and the bishop were far too much identified to suit him. The trumpet of the cavalier ever and anon broke in sharply, on the cathedral chant and the song of the choir. Besides, in any bishop's palace he would not have been in his element. He was a true parish priest, and the rude rafters of his own little church, suited him far better than the stone vault of the cathedral. His heart was with the rustics whom he had taught, and whose minds he had refined by his instructions ; he loved the wild fens, where the poor Saxon still lurked, better than the episcopal city. His plans had all been broken up when the bishop's command had called him away from Sempringham, and he had only submitted to leave it, in obedience to the will of God. His heart yearned for the youths and maid-

ens, whom he had taught in his school, and for his village children, and the rude husbandmen and housewives whose souls he had raised from the dust, to which many a long year of toil had well-nigh bound them. In addition to this, he seems to have felt a growing conviction that with such a bishop as Alexander, he could do nothing where he was. The secular clergy had never yet recovered from the wretched state in which the Norman invasion had found them ; and however gradual and merciful had been the introduction of the law of celibacy among them, still the canons of the councils at the time show plainly that the new state of things sat uneasily upon them. They still wanted their hereditary benefices, and that continual progress towards the secularization of church property, to which the Saxon church had been tending. The grave and august idea of a body of unmarried clergy, is with difficulty grasped by those on whom it is binding, hard as it is to eradicate it, when once it has taken root. Flagrant disorders had therefore broken out among the clergy, which required new and stringent laws to repress them. Alexander was present at the council which met to reform the church in 1127, but a splendid and a military prelate was not the man to enforce the strict provisions of such an assembly. Gilbert seems to have felt this bitterly. One of the seven archdeaconries of Lincoln was offered to him by Alexander, probably soon after this very council of London. Its sixth canon had solemnly conjured all archdeacons to assist in enforcing celibacy, as was their duty, and Gilbert felt that this high office was one which his shoulders could not bear. The archdeacons of Lincoln were great men ; and one of them is said *by Henry of Huntingdon*, to be “ the richest of all the

archdeacons now in England." But Gilbert loved poverty too well to be a princely churchman, and he refused the office, saying, at the same time, that he knew no quicker way to perdition. He felt himself totally unfit to rule so many ; his path, he thought, lay among the poor of the earth, among simple rustics and children ; but he trembled at the thought of being set on high among the clergy, with power to chastise. The Bishop seeing him so much in earnest, gave up the point.

It appears to have been not long after this, and about the year 1130, that he left the bishop's palace altogether.<sup>1</sup> The immediate cause of his departure is not known. That the step did not alienate Alexander from him is evident from the uniform support which he ever after received from the bishop. He went back to his parish with the greatest joy ; he found much alteration in his old friends. The young girl whom he had left in her father's house, was now a grown-up maiden. He himself was changed also : he went away a layman, but he was now a priest, and his parishioners were now properly his flock, whom he could feed with his own hand, and not by another's. Besides this, he had many years' experience in the confessional, and the guidance of souls. The habits of purity and austerity which he had ever practised, had now become invigorated by years, and his character for sanctity had been spread abroad by his high station, so as to be well-nigh above

<sup>1</sup> It appears that he left it in the reign of Henry I., for his biographer says that the nunnery was founded by him in that reign. As Henry died in 1135, he probably quitted Lincoln a few years before that time. The Derby annals bring it nearer, by fixing the date of the nunnery at 1131. It probably was between 1127 and 1131.

the reach of scandal. It should also be observed, that from the fact which he himself states, of the large patrimony which had fallen to his lot, his father must have died between his return from Paris, and the time of which we are now writing. He was, therefore, lord of the manor of Sempringham, and a rich man. From the terms which he uses,<sup>1</sup> it also appears that the power which he had over his parish churches was very great. It may be, that the church lands were in the hands of his family ; at all events, he was the patron, as well as the incumbent of the living. Possessed, as he was, also, of the favour of one of the most powerful prelates in England, what might he not hope to do, with wealth and power in his hands ? He had long made up his mind to give up all for Christ's sake ; the only question was, how it was to be done. Father and mother were dead, and he was alone in the world ; for it does not appear that he had either brother or sister. His whole thoughts were concentrated in his spiritual children ; and they were to him father and mother, and brethren and sisters. For their use, he intended to give up his patrimony, and to restore the churches of Sempringham and Tirington, absolutely into the hands of the church, which, during his father's life, he could not do. His intimacy with the bishop left him very much the choice of the mode of so doing, and he waited quietly God's time, till he could see how it could best be done. He certainly had no deep views on the subject ; and the foundation of an order appears never to have entered his head. With all its deep self-devotion, his mind was of a quiet and a homely cast. Indeed, his was, in all respects, if we may so say, a homely lot ; his parish

<sup>1</sup> *He says that he wishes "mancipare divino cultui ecclesias," which he possessed "libera possessione."*

was the home of his childhood, and his parishioners were those whose familiar faces he had known, even when, a neglected boy in his father's house, he was so little like the heir to the lands and the manor ; the youths and the maidens whom he was now guiding, were the first favourite pupils of his school. His character, therefore, is a specimen of one which seldom appears in the history of the times, and which yet must be taken into the account, if we would understand them. It is quite true, that they were times of romance ; the history of most monasteries would probably be what is called romantic. As, in the world, rapine and violence, and clever fraud, were the order of the day, so also, in religion, the great and mighty good by which God overthrew wickedness, was often done, as it were, by fits and starts, by a holy violence, which took heaven and earth by force. The whole structure of society was framed on a notion of law, partially restraining physical force, and yet legalizing it, by bringing it under its cognizance. Thus the legal trial by battle, which, be it remembered, sometimes decided ecclesiastical causes,<sup>1</sup> was but the law interposing, to regulate what would be sure to have taken place, without its interposition. So again, the monastic rule was the regulation of the self-devotion with which God inspired holy men and women, who thirsted for a more perfect way. Hence, side by side with the charter of the monastery, would often be its history, telling how there once dwelt in the greenwood an outlaw, and as he slept on a grassy knoll, among his merry men, under the trees, in the summer time, God, in his mercy, sent him a vision, and he left his followers and became a hermit,

<sup>1</sup> *Matt. Par.* p. 1053.

in the place where, afterwards, the abbey was built.<sup>1</sup> And these stories were very often the real truth, though at other times they were legends—that is, truth, mixed with falsehood. At the same time, it should always be remembered, that as, besides the romantic side of things, there were law and custom, and deep policy in the affairs of the world, so also, the Church was a compact and an orderly body, with its rules of holy obedience, its laws and canons. It had its quiet parish-priests, and to this class, to all appearance, Gilbert was to the end of life to belong. England had, it is true, its secluded nooks and its vast forests, where earl or baron,<sup>2</sup> as he rode through its depths, winding his horn in the merry chace, would light on a holy hermit, clad in skins, serving God in the hole of the rock ; but it had besides, its green meadows and noiseless streams, with the willows on their banks, and the miller's pool, and all the tame scenery which meets us now-a-days. Gilbert's lot seemed likely to be cast in with those whose good deeds are confined to one little spot ; but the quiet brook often widens into the broad river, and our Lord willed that this lowly tree, planted by the water side, should bear fruit an hundred-fold.

His first thought was to establish a monastery in the parish, and to connect it with the parish church. It was to be the head-quarters of religion at Sempringham, and the visible centre, round which all religious associations would cling. In this way alone, could the wild and untamed vices of the rude people be cured ; human nature can hardly believe that its strong passions can be restrained at all, till they have seen men

<sup>1</sup> *Dugdale Mon. Angl.* 6, 893.

<sup>2</sup> *Dugdale Ibid.*

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within whom all human desires are actually dead. Gilbert first intended that his future convent was to be inhabited by monks ; he watched diligently the spiritual progress of the most promising among the men of his flock, but they were bowed down with the cares of this world. If he could keep them from open sin, he thought himself happy. Monks and nuns are not commodities to be found everywhere, and to be moulded for the nonce whenever they are wanted. Funds may be found, and buildings raised, and vestments manufactured, but it requires a special vocation from God to make man or woman renounce the world. And God at this time favoured Gilbert, for He had, in His goodness, determined that amidst the wickedness of the land, Sempringham should be the abode of holy virgins, whose purity would rise up before Him as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. From the early habits which he had acquired in his school, Gilbert had never loved children ; probably the remembrance of his own wayward childhood might have risen up before him, and inspired him with a desire of guiding them to keep their souls in their first unsullied brightness. He had thus acquired a natural influence over the children of the place which he had never lost, and when he came back from Lincoln, a priest of high reputation, he was welcomed more gladly than the maidens, who were but children when he left them. The world had not sullied them in the meanwhile, and he found that the good seed which he had sown in their hearts, had sprung up and borne fruit. And now that his plan of founding a community of monks had failed, he turned his thoughts towards them. The strict habits of religious seclusion in which he had been cherished, imposed *him greatly to attempt the establishment of a*

nunnery. How could he, who had quitted the house in which he lodged on account of a dream, now undertake the government of a female community? It is true, that the intercourse between the sisters and their director was so reduced to rule, that however familiar, it was one of ceremony, like the ordinary customs of society; yet from his innate mistrust of self, he shrunk from the responsibility. It is probable, that some time elapsed before he could make up his mind to take the final step. At length he could not resist such evident marks of God's will; the quiet and calm resolution of the maidens to dedicate themselves for ever, showed that it was not the sentimentalism of a moment, but a real vocation from above. He went to the bishop of Lincoln to consult him on the subject; Alexander received him with the utmost cordiality, and entering warmly into his views, sent him back with all the necessary powers. The holy virgins were filled with joy at the news. None can estimate the greatness of the joy of a woman's heart when the love of Christ has fully seized upon it. Terrible as it is in its strength when fixed upon an earthly object, its intensity is increased tenfold when it rests upon the heavenly spouse. How wonderful has been the self-devotion of women from the first dawn of Christianity! None can think upon the wonders of the Incarnation, without thinking upon the mother of the Lord; and none can tell the wellspring of joy in that heart on which lay the Saviour of the world, for a favour was granted to her, which not the highest archangel can estimate. Ever since that time, some portions of the same joy must in a measure have inundated the heart of every virgin who has become the spouse of the Lord. What must have been the gush of joy in the heart of the Magdalene, when the ever-

blessed Lord said "Mary," and she turned and saw Him the everlasting source of all joy? Such in its measure must have been the happiness of the seven virgins for whom Gilbert, with the bishop's leave, now built a cloister adjoining the north wall of the church of Sempringham. Among them, the maiden whom Gilbert left in her father's house, shut up her beauty for ever from the eyes of men. These seven virgins, chanting the praises of God in the dead of night around the altar of that little church, doubtless averted the anger of God from the land, with all its terrible pollutions. Such souls as these, who sit in quiet, with mortified bodies and chastened hearts ever fixed on heaven, have their own place in the christian scheme. If any one doubts it, let him think on the time when the Lord dwelt with His virgin mother in the house at Nazareth. No one will say that any part of our Lord's sojourn on earth was useless; and yet the world knows nothing of what was going on during these many years, except that in that poor cottage were obedience, and daily tasks and contemplation.

Before, however, going on to notice the important result to which these small beginnings of the order of Sempringham afterwards grew, we should cast our eyes across the channel to France, where a parallel movement had taken place rather earlier in the century. It is seldom that any movement occurs in any corner of the church, without being felt elsewhere; nothing stops with itself in the body of Christ, it at once vibrates in some other part, sometimes close, and sometimes distant. Thus, about the year 1100, the blessed Robert of Arbrissel, had founded the abbey of Fontevraud, which agrees remarkably with what the priory of Sempringham, as we shall see, soon became. Like

Gilbert, Robert was a Parisian doctor, and like him had been summoned from a school to be the chief adviser of the bishop of his diocese, and the reformer of the clergy. On the death of this prelate, Silvester, bishop of Rennes, the rage of those who loved not his reforms, drove him away. Henceforth, his life presents a marked contrast to that of Gilbert ; he became a hermit, and sought the depths of a wild forest near Anjou. The savage wilderness did not however sour his heart ; he learned to converse with God, and when soon after his solitude was discovered, the sweetness which shone on his emaciated features, won all beholders ; and when he spoke, the fervour of his words gained the hearts of his hearers. Crowds streamed into the wilderness, to hear this new preacher of righteousness, and many left the world on the spot, to join him in his forest. Urban II., in his voyage to France, heard of Robert's fame, and sent for him ; he bade him preach before the council of Anjou, and the burning words of this hermit, thus fresh from the wilderness, and re-appearing among men, seemed to him so striking, that he called him the Sower of the word, and bade him henceforth go about as an Apostolic preacher. Robert obeyed the supreme pontiff, and went forth as a missionary. He went about the neighbouring dioceses, penetrating into the wildest villages, and preaching in streets and market-places. The effect was electric ; crowds of men and women followed him everywhere, and everywhere some souls were converted to Christ, from a life of wickedness. He walked barefoot, fasted continually, and often spent the whole night in prayer. Pope Urban was right ; this was just the apostle to despatch among a population where fearful licentiousness is said to *have reigned*. Women, especially, were touched by

his words, and it is expressly said, that while two of his companions assisted him in directing men, he had the exclusive direction of females. We know that our most blessed Lord, to whom the sight of sin must have been an inconceivable pain, suffered a foul adulteress to be near Him, and said to her, Go, and sin no more ; Mary Magdalene came still nearer to Him, and washed His feet with her tears. And Robert, following the steps of his Lord, was especially known as the converter of the most miserable outcasts of society. One day, at Rouen, he entered into a haunt of sin ; some unhappy wretches clustered about him, and he spoke to them of the mercy of Christ. They looked on, in stupid wonder, till one of them said, " Who art thou that speakest thus ? For twenty years have I been in this house, and no one has spoken to me of God, or bade me not despair of mercy." The poor creatures followed him out of the house, and afterwards led a life of penitence. But it was not only such miserable victims, that Robert, by God's grace, saved from inveterate sin ; Bertrada de Montfort, who in the very cathedral of Tours on the eve of Whitsunday, seduced the heart of king Philip of France, and planned to fly from her lord, the Count of Anjou—the dangerous and scheming beauty, the witchery of whose talents had well nigh won her a crown—Bertrada, the scandal of the age, whom a Pope in council had excommunicated with her guilty paramour, was converted by Robert, and ended her days in the most rude penances, a nun of Fontevraud. It was there, in the midst of waste and uncultivated lands, covered with a wild thicket of brushwood, that Robert collected all those whom he had won from the world for Christ. His first monastery was but a collection of rude huts, separated into two divisions,

with two separate oratories, one for the brethren, the other for the sisters. Around that part in which the females dwelt, was a rough enclosure, which was nothing but a high hedge of thorns.<sup>1</sup> The nuns were all day long engaged in prayer and psalmody, while the monks laboured with their hands to support them, and struggled with the stubborn thorn and the tangled weeds, the growth of centuries around their habitation. Even in the life-time of Robert, Fontevraud had grown into a large monastery. Within its enclosure there were, in fact, three monasteries, one for holy virgins, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, another for penitent women, called after St. Mary Magdalene, and a third was a lazar-house for the sick and the lepers. The reform spread throughout France, and in many parts of the country lands were given to Robert, where he founded new houses, where those un-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Michelet, in his history of France, has repeated a story against the blessed Robert which even Bayle, though he indulged his foul wit on the subject, acknowledged to be false. The story is founded on two letters, one of Geoffrey of Vendôme, and another of Marbodius, bishop of Rennes. Mr. Michelet should have recollected that both Geoffrey and Marbodius profess to speak merely on hearsay, and Geoffrey is known to have changed his opinion, while it may be presumed that Marbodius did so too, from the fact, that his friend Hildebert, of Mans, was one of Robert's greatest patrons. Besides which, there is great reason to believe, that the letter ascribed to Marbodius, is really by the heretic, Roscelinus. It is a great pity that Mr. Michelet's inveterate habit of generalizing should lead him to prefer general, to particular truth. We do not charge him with dishonesty; on his theory, all history is a myth, and therefore, an opinion is just as valuable as a fact. When we have myths, we must make the best of them; but let not good personages of flesh and blood be treated like Romulus and Remus, if facts can be had.

happy women, whom the world had soiled, might find a refuge, where they might chastise by rude penances those bodies, the temples of the Holy Ghost, which they had stained. But the peculiarity of the order was, that the abbess every where held jurisdiction over the monks as well as the nuns ; the men were there only to labour for the sisters, as St. John ministered to the Blessed Virgin. Robert's work did not die with him, and many a daughter of the blood royal of France became famous for her piety as abbess of Fontevraud. Here our own Henry Plantagenet and Richard Cœur de lion were buried : and here Eleanor too, Henry's queen, the beautiful and guilty daughter of William of Aquitaine, who transferred herself with Guienne and Poitou, and all her lands, to the English crown, she too, after her long and restless life, bequeathed her body to Fontevraud, that it might lie by the side of her husband and her son.

Any one will see at once the correspondence of the rise of this order on the continent with that of the nunnery of Sempringham, and a great conformity between the two will soon be apparent, as Sempringham developes ; and yet there at once also appears a great contrast between them. The movement in the two countries appears to have been different. While in France the queens of the time are the scandal of the age ; those of England and Scotland appear as reformers of the corrupt court of their husbands. The beautiful sorceress Bertrada, placed the king of France under the ban of the church of Rome, ever the great defender of the purity of marriage. Queen Eleanor, with her licentious train, had the merit of ruining the crusade, which St. Bernard preached ; she too must needs go to *the Holy Land*, the daughter of the sunny

south, the land of the gay science and of heresy, she whose character had far more to do with the burning East than became a Christian queen. But on our side of the channel, were Matilda and St. Margaret, the reformers of Scotland, who banished from the kingdom many foul relics of Paganism which still infected it ; and in England, was Matilda, the wife of Henry I., the "good queen Maude," whom the English hailed as the daughter of their ancient kings, and whose marriage tended to amalgamate the Norman and the Saxon races. Terrible as was the licentiousness in England, the nobles seem every where to have been the guilty parties. The monasteries were filled with virgins who had fled thither to preserve themselves from the dangers to which they were exposed. Matilda herself was taken out of a convent whither she had fled for that purpose, and was for that reason adjudged by St. Anselm not to have really taken the veil, and to be still competent to become Henry's wife. The wicked nobles, whom the gentle majesty of her virtue kept in awe, nicknamed the king and queen, Godric and Godiva,<sup>1</sup> and laughed at Henry's domestic life with his quiet Saxon queen. They still remembered the terrible license of the Red King's wicked court. Corresponding to this difference between the two countries, was the contrast in the characters of Gilbert and of Robert. The wild energy of the hermit of Arbrissel was necessary to bear down the torrent of vice which opposed him ; could any one but a barefooted hermit speak to hearts spoiled by inveterate sin, and cleanse

<sup>1</sup> The wit seems to consist in the names being Saxon. Godiva comes, probably, from the old story of the Saxon queen who *saved the people from taxation*.

bosoms encrusted with a leprosy of guilt ? Gilbert had to do with untainted lilies fit for the garden of the Lord, he therefore had but to build his cloister adjoining to the quiet parish church of Sempringham, while the rough thorn-hedge, and the rougher discipline of Robert were necessary for Fontevraud. While Robert roams through France by the Apostolic mandate, preaching every where a crusade of penitence, Gilbert returns to the home of his childhood, and places his seven holy virgins in the church where he had first learned to worship God, and where, in all probability, he had been baptized. The church of Christ could find room enough for both, just as around the cross, there was room for the ever-virgin Mary, and St. Mary Magdalene. Holy virginity is no less a portion of Christianity than holy penitence, and the denial of the virtue of the one most certainly impairs the full belief in the other, for the Communion of Saints and the Forgiveness of sins lie close together in the creed. Nor is holy virginity the creation of an age of romance ; Gilbert, when he built the cloister at Sempringham, thought but little, as we shall soon see, of picturesque processions and flowing robes of white ; he only thought of the blessed Virgin, and of St. John, and of the white robed choir in heaven, who have followed the Virgin Lamb wherever He hath gone. Still less did he think about the usefulness of what he was doing ; as well might he have thought about the uses of chastity, for virginity is only chastity carried to a supernatural degree. Our blessed Lord has exalted human nature ; He hath made it the partaker of His own Divinity ; and we have virtues which were never possible before the coming of the Lord, because their formal cause was wanting, even the Holy Spirit.

Faith, Hope, and Charity have their foundation in the will and in the intellect, yet they are supernatural, because of the new powers which the adorable Incarnation has infused into our nature. It is not then to be wondered at, if their outward acts should sometimes take a form which seemed beyond the powers of a human body and a human soul, voluntary poverty, and holy obedience, and a chaste virginity. The cross of Christ has stretched itself over a vast field, of which heathen morality never dreamed, and they who deny the merit of virginity leave out a portion of Christian morals. They who can believe that no real righteousness is infused into the Saint, will, of course, see no beauty in the virgin soul, though she be all glorious within, with the intense fire of love, which the Holy Spirit has poured into her. The Cross has a philosophy of its own, which thwarts in unexpected directions the philosophy of the world. If Gilbert had ever heard of a certain Jovinian, he might have known that he was half a stoic, as well as wholly heretic ; because he could see no degrees in saintliness, neither could he discern that one vice was worse than another.<sup>1</sup> Again the deep philosopher who has set the bounds of the human intellect, which it cannot pass, he too has imagined a mysterious bound to the human will, and denies in his system the merit of holy virginity. So be it, but Christ has illumined the intellect with faith, and the will with charity, and there will ever be holy virgins in the Church in spite of transcendental philosophy. The seven nuns of Sempringham doubtless knew nothing of this philosophy ; but they knew of our blessed Lord's words, promising eternal life to those who should give

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug. de Hær. 82. see the connexion in St. Thomas Aq. *contra gen. lib. iiii.* 189.

up father and mother, brethren and sisters, or wife, for his sake. The church, by regulating monastic vows, only pointed out one way of doing what Christ prescribed in the general, and furnished her children with the means of gaining this blessing. The bible says nothing about monks and nuns, but it says a great deal about prayer, and about taking up the cross. It is quite true that the cross has sanctified domestic affections, by raising marriage to a dignity which it never possessed before. And yet human affections are terrible things ; love is as strong and insatiable as death,<sup>1</sup> and how hard is it to love, as though we loved not, and to weep, as though we wept not, and to laugh, as though we laughed not. Happy are they to whom human affections are not all joy ; the mother has her cross as well as the nun, and it will be blessed to her. Happy they who have to tend the sick bed of a parent or a friend ; they need seek no further, they have their cross. Yet, happiest of all is she, who is marked out for ever from the world, whose slightest action assumes the character of adoration, because she is bound by a vow to her heavenly spouse, as an earthly bride is bound by the nuptial vow to her earthly lord. Vows should only be made under the protection of a strong religious system, but when they can be taken, they whom God by His providence calls, as He often does, to lead a single life, are far happier in the peaceful cloister than in the world. Even though some may have mistaken their vocation, and it had been better to marry, yet their vows are a protection, and every Christian can, by God's grace, in any case live a virgin life. Terrible cases have occurred, as we may by and bye see, of fallen nuns, but have fearful passions never broken out in the world ?

<sup>1</sup> Cant. viii.

## CHAPTER V.

*The spread of the Institute.*

WHEN the cloister was finished, and Alexander of Lincoln had blessed it, and received the profession of the nuns, Gilbert had done a great work. He had gained an object on which to spend his patrimony, and had saved seven souls from the troubles and dangers of the world. But he was still far from having done his work ; the institute of his nuns was still rude and unformed, and it does not yet appear what rule they followed. It was about the year 1131, when first they quitted the world, and it was many years before the order was fully formed, and the steps by which it grew, are but scantily related by the chronicler of his life. First, it was a difficulty with him how his convent was to be supplied with necessaries. The sisters could not go out themselves, and butchers and bakers could not go to them. He first employed women who lived in the world, to transmit to them what they wanted for their daily food. This was however but a clumsy contrivance, and contrary to the first rule of monastic discipline, that a convent should be perfect in itself, and entirely independent of the world around. The echoes of worldly news could not fail to find their way into the nun's cell, and to call up images, which ought to be banished from her heart. Earthly cares must often call to earth the mind of her who rules her husband's house, though these too are meritorious, if done to the glory of God ; but the nun is continually to have her conversation in heaven, where Christ *sitteth at the right hand of God*. To effect this, the

world must be diligently kept out of her heart ; and the girls who went backwards and forwards, between market and the convent, were but too willing retailers of news. This was for a long time a difficulty with Gilbert ; at length, one day, William, the first abbot of Rievaulx, passed through Sempringham, and paid its rector a visit. Gilbert had very probably never seen the white habit before, for the Cistercian reform had not long been introduced into England. From that moment he conceived a respect for the Cistercians, which never quitted him. He consulted William on his difficulties, and was advised by him to institute an order of lay-sisters who were to help the choir-nuns, and to perform menial offices for them ; in other words, they were to correspond to the lay-brethren of Cîteaux. Gilbert took this advice, but he was too patient, and too much accustomed to wait on the providence of God, to introduce the change violently. The poor peasant girls whom he employed, were too much accustomed to hard labour and coarse fare to find even conventual discipline hard, but there were habits of humility, obedience, and strict purity to be acquired, which could not be learned in a day. He called them before him, and explained to them what he required of them, without abating a jot of the rigour of the discipline. The poor girls at first shrunk from the trial, but when he spoke to them from time to time of contempt of the world, of the giving up of their own will, and of the rewards of heaven, they first listened to him attentively, and then by degrees their hearts began to yield. It was far better for them to live in a convent, though they were under restraint, and they could not go out when they would, than to work all day long in the fields of a *merciless* taskmaster, and not be sure of

earning a livelihood after all. The sound of the convent-bell would sweeten their toil, and kind and holy words console their hearts ; besides, what was not least, they would be sure of being fed and clothed, and at last they determined to close with their pastor's proposal, and to give up the world. This however did not satisfy Gilbert, and he waited another year before he received their profession. He clothed them like the nuns, except that, instead of the ample cuculla and scapular of the nuns, the lay sisters wore a black cloak, lined with white lamb's wool ; the broad hood of their garment was made large enough to cover the shoulders, and to envelope the throat and bosom like the scapular of the nuns. The simple occupations of these poor peasant-girls shows more than any thing else, how monastic discipline is only Christianity in its perfection, hallowing and taking up into itself the meanest relations of life. The lay-sister was to take the hard work in brewing and baking, in spinning and washing ; if the nuns were otherwise engaged and did not come to help them, they were not to wait, but to begin without them. They mended clothes and prepared the washing-tubs, and some of them ever attended in the kitchen, to chop up the vegetables, and to hand utensils to the nun who was cook for the week. In these offices, intermingled with psalmody and other spiritual exercises at stated hours, they passed their lives, and for the temporal things which they ministered, the good nuns instructed them in the science of the cross, and Gilbert himself assiduously trained them up, that their earthly toil might bring fruit in heaven.

But though women can help each other to bake and brew, they cannot plough and dig ; and Gilbert soon

found that he must needs procure labourers, for the grounds attached to the nunnery. A convent of monks can support itself, but nuns, though they can do much alone, require men to labour for them. Again, in this difficulty, his friends of Citeaux helped him. He was in a greater strait than before ; lay-sisters were comparatively easy to manage, especially in what was a nunnery already, but the rude rustic was a much more unmanageable creature, and most unpromising to reduce to monastic rule. But while he was deliberating, some monks of the Cistercian order rode into his habitation, accompanied, as usual, by some lay-brethren. The whole equipage struck Gilbert, who had been used to the splendid train of Alexander of Lincoln. He at once seized the idea of the lay-brethren of the order, and determined thus to imitate the Cistercians, by turning every farm-house on his estates into something like a monastery, where, throughout all the appurtenances of cow-houses, stables, and barns, all should be subject to religious discipline. He had already done a vast service to Sempringham ; for how many poor women, whom poverty, and their defenceless condition, exposed to danger, had he safely housed in a religious house ? He now was to do the same for the men ; and in this case, his mercy was extended even to a lower and more degraded class. Some whom he took, were the churls from his own land, who were born on his demesne, and whom he had known and supported from their infancy ; but others were of the lowest class in the land, runaway serfs,<sup>1</sup> whom now he freed, by

<sup>1</sup> *A dominis suis transfugos, quos nomen religionis mancipavit.* These may have been churls, and not serfs, but they were most probably the latter, for he seems to contrast them with his own famuli.

taking them into religion ; others again, were wayside beggars. From these poor creatures he made up his lay-brethren ; he clothed them in the same rough garb as the Cistercian brethren, only that, besides the white tunic, they wore, under the outer cloak, of hoddens grey, a short mantle, lined with skins, reaching to the middle of the thigh, which, as it does not occur in the rule of Cîteaux, was probably an English garment, better adapted to our inclement sky ; over the head was drawn the Cistercian hood, covering the shoulders and the chest. These poor men were not taught to read, but they were taught humility, obedience, and the strictest purity, and were treated with a tenderness to which they had been utter strangers in the world. Instead of being ground down to the earth by a secular lord, they were under the gentle rule of the Church, and their temporal and eternal welfare was cared for. They had a chapter of their own, like monks, and services proportioned to their condition in life, and their spiritual director guided them in the narrow way which leads to everlasting life. Especially were they warned to beware of the Saxon vice of intoxication ; and above all, were they forbidden to set up the place “which, in Teutonic tongue, is called the tap.”<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to calculate how far the influence of such a community might spread among the peasantry throughout England, when there was established among them, and before their eyes, such an institute, where, for the love of God, brethren, who had been rude peasants like themselves, were serving religious women whom they had never seen, except in church, with their veils over their faces, though they had heard their voices mingling in the chant. On an the

<sup>1</sup> *Vid. Gilbertine rule ap. Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 2. p. 65.* 506

accession of the lay-brethren to his family, Gilbert's nunnery might be said to be now complete ; all were hard at work in the community ; in the granges around it, the lay-brethren were distributed, each at work at his own occupation ; in one corner, was the blacksmith at his forge, in his black rochet, or scanty coat without sleeves ;<sup>1</sup> and here was the carter,<sup>2</sup> with his horses shorn of the flowing honours of the mane and tail, that they might accord with monastic simplicity ; in another place, was the brother who had the charge of the whole grange, with the keys at his girdle, diligently searching for eggs, and storing up the honey, that all may be sent to the refectory of the nunnery.<sup>3</sup> And this peaceful family went on in the stormy times when Stephen was battling for the crown, when, in the self-same county, Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, was shorn of his three castles. Alarms of war were sounding about them ; for it was near Lincoln that Stephen fought the battle where he was taken prisoner ; and the great baron Gilbert of Ghent, of whom was held the manor of Sempringham, shared the king's captivity.<sup>4</sup> Abbeys and monasteries were burning about them, and the church, all over England, was in trouble ; the see of York was vacant ; Durham was in the hands of Comyn, and the archbishop of Canterbury was in little favour with the king ; and when he threatened to cross over the Alps, and appeal to the Pope, Stephen declared that he might find it no such easy matter to return. And yet, in the midst of all this trouble, the convent of Sempringham was holding its even course ; in the darkest times there are ever some little nooks in the Church, where there is peace.

<sup>1</sup> Reg. Gilb. De frat. 1.<sup>2</sup> Ibid 19.<sup>3</sup> Ibid 17.<sup>4</sup> John of Hexham, in ann. 1142.

Even Alexander, of Lincoln, found comfort in thinking on the parish church of Sempringham, and all that was going on about it. The death of his uncle, Roger, bishop of Salisbury, apparently, by chagrin at the fall of his power, seems to have deeply affected him, and he determined to give to the nuns of Sempringham an island, called Haverholm, formed by some marshy ground, and the waters of a little river near Sleaford, the site of one of his unfortunate castles.<sup>1</sup> He had before offered the ground to a colony of Cistercians, from Fountains, but even they, apparently, found it too wet, and removed to Louth Park. The bishop gave it to the nuns, "for the soul of King Henry, and my uncle Roger, some time bishop of Salisbury."<sup>2</sup> The charter which contains Alexander's gift, makes it plain that by this time the nuns had adopted a modified Cistercian rule; for it says of them, that they follow, "a strict life, a holy life; the life of the monks of Cistercian order, as far as the weakness of their sex allows." This probably means that they adopted the unmitigated rule of St. Benedict. Their rules were afterwards drawn out definitely, and when this is noticed, it will appear more clearly what this meant. So much

<sup>1</sup> Roger died in 1139, Hoveden, Script. post Bed. p. 277, and the foundation of Haverholm must have been about this time.

<sup>2</sup> In the year 1131, where we have placed the foundation of the nunnery, there were very few Cistercian abbeys in France; indeed, the abbey of Tard, in the diocese of Langres, is the only one of which the foundation is certainly previous to that time. Juilly, it appears certain, was a Benedictine dependency on Molesme. It is, therefore, very unlikely that St. Gilbert should have begun so early to imitate the Cistercians. The idea must have struck him from his increasing intercourse with Cistercians.

of the Cistercian rule consisted in manual labours, quite inapplicable to females, that the conformity of the life of Gilbert's nuns to the brethren of Cîteaux, must have been the austerity of their mode of life, and the use of meditation. The sisters of Sempringham, though they washed and spun, and brewed, yet, having been Gilbert's scholars, were learned maidens, in their way, for when their numbers increased, it was found necessary to prohibit the speaking Latin amongst each other, which would, in fact, have divided the convent into the learned and unlearned sisters. They had, therefore, more facilities for spiritual reading, and for meditation, than were common ; but for all that, it was a bold thing to apply the rule of St. Benedict to delicate females, in all the strictness in which St. Scholastica had learned it from the lips of her brother. Nunneries had degenerated both in England and France ; in England, they had not long ago been censured for their splendid robes and secular apparel ;<sup>1</sup> and a very few years later, the council of Rheims complained of the nuns, who lived irregularly, each on her own property, without even keeping within the precincts of the cloister.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, the good nuns, though they little suspected it, were reformers, when they were transported to their little island of St. Mary, of Haverholm, where they had nothing to look upon but their own green meadows and cultivated land, and beyond, the little river, running between its low banks, and the sluggish waters of the marsh, shutting them out from the world.

<sup>1</sup> Council of London, 1139.    <sup>2</sup> Geroch. ap. Baluz. vol. i. 204.

## CHAPTER VI.

*Gilbert in France.*

It has taken but a short chapter to tell how, from 1131 to 1139, the order, or rather the convent, of Sempringham was increasing, and that it had sent out a colony of nuns to Haverholm ; and it takes but a few words to say, that from the foundation of Haverholm, to 1148, the fame of the sanctity of the nuns spread far and wide, and that their numbers still further increased, so that many noblemen gave lands to Gilbert, wishing to have a convent built near their own homes.<sup>1</sup> Many things may have occurred in these years of which we know nothing ; at all events, Gilbert was growing old all the while ; near twenty years are added to his life in that time. Many things must have happened to him and to his institute, but we need not regret the loss of them. The less that monks and nuns are heard of the better. They are the under-current in church history ; they need not appear on the surface, though their action in the deep waters purifies the

<sup>1</sup> It does not appear what convents were founded at this time. Bullington is founded for nuns and clerks, and, therefore, was not built till after Gilbert's return from France. Cattleley, which is placed by Dugdale in Stephen's time, as appears from the chart of foundation, was not founded till Henry II's reign. Ormesby and Sixhill, the dates of which are unknown, may have been founded then, but the fact most probably is, that the lands were given, but the monasteries not founded, till after Gilbert had been to Clairvaux.

whole. They are, so to speak, the moving element in the church, whose doctrine and hierarchy is one, and immoveable ; thus, they vary themselves, as the wants of the church vary. They are the reformers of the church, that is, of her children, when faith waxes cold ; the pliant and elastic element, which takes a different shape, according to the Proteus-form of sin, which it opposes. In the first fervour of their conversion, they work some great work ; they may afterwards degenerate, but the work is done, and by the time that they require reform, so, too, may the church. But all their work is done in secret, by contemplation and prayer and penance ; and whenever they make their appearance on the surface of society, they portend a storm. It was a schism in the Church which called forth St. Bernard from his monastery, and now that Gilbert goes to visit the great abbot of Clairvaux, the stormy part of his life is to begin. But what takes him so far from his home when, for so many years, he had remained in quiet at Sempringham ? He must have been aroused indeed, to undertake it. And so he was ; what he had simply begun, for the sake of seven maidens, whose hearts God had filled with heavenly love, had now sprung up into an institute, which he could no longer manage alone. The very soul of the institute was spiritual guidance, and the sisters were now so numerous, that he could not bear the burden by himself. His friends, the Cistercians, had stood him in good stead, and he determined to apply to them, and to beg of them to take the institution into their hands. Events were taking place at Citeaux which made the year 1148 a favourable one for his request ; and we will precede him, to take a glimpse of the state of things on the Continent.

And first, where has St. Bernard been all this while ? he has had other work to do, since by God's grace, he restored unity to the church and placed Innocent II. on the papal throne. Many events had taken place at Rome since that time ; the turbulent nobles seem then to have been broken, and a republican element now appears to stir up that ever restless race. The cities of northern Italy were aroused, and the dark storm from the Apennines rolled its way on to Rome ; and this time it was guided by a man well fitted by his talents and his boldness to be the author of mischief. Arnold of Brescia rapidly saw the theory which would symbolize the new interests which thus stepped into the conflict, and he had a fiery enthusiasm and eloquence which fitted him to be its herald. He saw that the power of the bishops was irksome to the citizens. All will recollect the part which Milan took against its archbishop, Landulfus, in the middle of the eleventh century, and how often the same scenes were renewed in that turbulent city. Arnold took up this feeling, and attacked the prelates, many of whom, as was the case so often in the empire, were secular princes as well as bishops. Not that, he said, the churches of these bishops are not the house of God, but the prelates themselves are not bishops, and the people should not obey them.<sup>1</sup> He inveighed in strong terms against the secularity of the clergy, which was but too palpable, and thus he was looked upon as a reformer. He asserted that the spiritual and secular power are so totally distinct, that they cannot possibly by any means be joined. This doctrine is very like the great truth, that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, that is,

<sup>1</sup> Geroch ap. Gretser. vol. 12. Otto Frising. de Gest. Fred. ii. 21.

that the church of Christ has a power of her own, totally independent of, and above any earthly jurisdiction ; and it has deceived many since Arnold's time. He appealed to the ancient feelings of the Italian republics, and made them fiercer by giving them a seemingly religious direction. His doctrines spread southward ; and though he himself was obliged to fly to France, yet they raised a sedition in Rome, and Innocent's last days were embittered by the news that the Romans had re-established the senate and revolted from his authority. In the time of Celestine, his successor, they deposed the prefect of the city, an officer virtually appointed by the Pope, though nominally also by the emperor : and established an officer whom they called a patrician, probably from some notion which they had of the connexion of the title with the time of the Eastern empire. A more terrible event soon followed ; Lucius, the successor of Celestine, died from a wound received in attempting to quell an insurrection, and thus the blood of a successor of St. Peter, lay at the door of this infatuated and degraded people. It was at this time, that the mock senate of Rome determined to claim the right of assenting to the nomination of the supreme pontiff, in other words, as the representative of the people, it wished to restore the election to what it was before Innocent II's. time.<sup>1</sup> The cardinals were aware of this, and suddenly and hastily they met to elect the successor of St. Peter. The choice which they made astonished Christendom, when it was announced that they had elected Bernard, abbot of Saint Anastasius, a Cistercian convent near Rome, a man of blameless life and gentle manners, but apparently of little talents,

<sup>1</sup> Vid. *Life of St. Stephen*, p. 174.

and above all, not a member of the college of cardinals. They seem, in their alarm at the dreadful event which had just happened, to have determined on electing one not of their own body, for it was the rule of an ecclesiastical aristocracy that the Romans hated, and they pitched in their fright on the first eligible person of whom they could think. The finger of God was not the less observable in the whole transaction, for Eugenius III. had been a monk of Clairvaux, and St. Bernard's influence began at once to be felt in the church. The pontificate of Eugenius was an epoch in the church; he came just before the age of rescripts, and appeals, and canonists;<sup>1</sup> and the broad principles laid down by St. Bernard, of course influenced the practice of the papal courts, and, therefore, tended to modify the doctrine concerning appeals as laid down by Alexander III. Again, secular prelates soon began to feel a new influence in the court of Rome, proof against riches and magnificence.<sup>2</sup> The cardinals themselves were not slow in complaining of Gallican influence, and had it not been for St. Bernard's meekness, a schism might have separated France from Italy.<sup>3</sup> His election, however, was unanimous; out of his abbey they fetched this lowly and shamefaced monk, who had washed the dishes at Clairvaux; they took the spade and the reap-

<sup>1</sup> On the law of rescripts, see appendix to the third Lateran council ap. Mansi, p. xxxi. As to appeals, *ibid.* p. x. and compare. St. Bern. de Cons. lib. iii. c. 2. The canon law is said to have been compiled by Gratian, about A. D. 1150.

<sup>2</sup> John of Salisbury bears witness to the purity of Eugenius's administration.—Vid. Ciacconi. Vit. Eug. III.

<sup>3</sup> St. Bernard's letter to the cardinals on Eugenius's election, shows a doubt how far they would support him. For the discontent of the cardinals, v. Otto Frisin. de Gest. Frid. i, 57.

ing-hook out of his hand, and put the scarlet mantle over his white Cistercian habit, and in solemn procession enthroned him in the Lateran. All at once, a change came over this simple monk ; an unflinching firmness appeared in the sweet mannered brother, who, not long before, had found his abbey of St. Anastasius too much for his sick soul, and had longed for the forest and the cavern ; he even showed a talent for business, which none had seen before his mysterious elevation. This too, was totally apart from the influence of the abbot of Clairvaux. St. Bernard's soul sunk within him at the news. "God forgive you, what have ye done," he writes to the cardinals. "Had ye no wise and practical men among you that ye have elevated a man in a pauper's garb ? It is either an absurdity or a miracle." He knew well the poor brother of Clairvaux, and thought him totally unfit to sit in St. Peter's chair. He, therefore, did not even write to him till urged to do so by his friends. Eugenius had need of all the qualities which now appeared in him ; Arnold of Brescia was in Rome, now clad in monkish garb and fresh from the lessons of Abelard ; seditions were raised and cardinals' palaces burnt, not now by the nobles, for the Frangipani<sup>1</sup> were now on the Pope's side, but by the populace. The fiery monk had dazzled them with visions of old Rome, and they had dreams of the senate, the equestrian order, and the Capitol. Here was the old secular empire springing up in a grotesque form ; a wild mixture of the Gracchi, Julius Cæsar, and Constantine.<sup>2</sup> Added to this, the germs of those miserable revolutions of

<sup>1</sup> Otto Frisin. de Gest. Frid. i. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Vid. Letter of the Roman people to Conrad.—Otto Frisin. Ibid.

which the emperor Frederic afterwards took advantage, were desolating the north of Italy ; and an impatience of ecclesiastical rule had sprung up, which now broke out in the open maltreatment of bishops and archbishops in the north, just as the cardinals had suffered at Rome.<sup>1</sup> Eugenius pacified the north of Italy, but Rome was as yet beyond his power ; he was ultimately obliged to cross the Alps.

It was during this journey that Gilbert saw his holiness, and was brought in contact with a series of events which would look like romance, if history did not assure us of their truth. They are the outbursts of the young life of a christian people, before scepticism had touched the purity of their faith ; while at the same time, there come across us outbursts of wickedness at times almost ludicrous in its waywardness, and at other times terrible from its marring the good which God had prepared for Christendom. But most wonderful of all are they from the predominant influence of St. Bernard, whom God had raised up to guide his church amidst the dangers which surrounded her. It is refreshing to see a man, in a poor habit, riding at the side of kings and emperors, and guiding all things, simply because he is Christ's servant. At the time that Eugenius entered France, Louis was about to set out on the crusade which had been undertaken on the alarming news of the taking of Edessa. A great parliament<sup>2</sup> had been held at Etampes to elect the regent during the king's absence ; St. Bernard was in the midst of the circle of bishops and barons, and when their deliberations were over, he came forward at the head of them, and said to the king, Behold, here are

<sup>1</sup> Pet. Ven. Ep. iv. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Magnum colloquium.

thy two swords. The one was the great Suger, the other the count of Nevers. Both refused the office ; the count fled away and took the vows in a Carthusian monastery, but Suger was persuaded by St. Bernard to accept the charge. This event alone tended more than any other to consolidate the French monarchy, and prepare the way for Philip Augustus and St. Louis. This was on Septuagesima Sunday ; a little before Easter, Louis went to meet Eugenius at Dijon. When the royal procession approached, those around Eugenius cried out, The king, the king ; but Eugenius sat unmoved, and when Louis came near with his train of nobles, he leaped off his horse and kissed the pope's foot with tears of joy, thus doing homage to Christ in the person of his earthly representative. Then Eugenius raised him up and embraced him. Strange times were these, when religion was thus honoured, and St. Mary's prophecy had come to pass, and the strong things of the world had fallen down before the weak. It was this that passed through the mind of Eugenius when he embraced Louis, and remembered his own lowly origin, and said, that God indeed had raised the simple out of the mire, reminding the king also, that he, a monk of Clairvaux, had worked in the kitchen with Henry of France, Louis's brother. And yet, the times had their strange caprices too, for not long after, when the pope went to celebrate in solemn procession at St. Genevieve, the attendants of the canons quarrelled with those of the pope, and they fought with their fists with such fury, that even king Louis, in attempting to separate the combatants, suffered in the fray.<sup>1</sup> On Easter

<sup>1</sup> *Baronius in ann. 1147.*

day, in the abbey of St. Denis, in the presence of Innocentius, Louis received the Oriflamme from the altar, and the great barons of the realm were about him, and all the chivalry of France, with the knight-templars in white cloaks, and all wore the cross to show that they were on their way to rescue the Holy Sepulchre. This was a day of joy, but alas ! how few of that brilliant day ever saw again the shores of France. By the side of Louis sat his lovely and fascinating queen, with all her damsels around her ; it had been well if she had been left behind, for God, on account of the sins of the king, would not allow them to rescue the Holy City. However, none could foresee on that happy Easter day.

After their departure, St. Bernard had other work to do ; and let not the reader be impatient to meet him at Cîteaux. The delay will enable him the better to understand the course of events. That sect which afterwards became the Albigenses, and in that way threatened to undermine the whole church, had attracted the vigilant eye of Eugenius. As it first appeared to us, it takes the simple shape of an inveterate hatred of all mystery, with an especial dislike of churchmen and church authority. Its apostle was a runaway monk called Henry, a sort of impure and inferior Arnold of Brescia. Peter<sup>1</sup> the venerable, considered the heretics to have come from among the wild and ignorant inhabitants of the Alpine valleys ; but he soon found to his order that it had spread into the fair plains of Provence. There, in this luxurious and half Moorish country, met another element, a subtle Manicheism, and this compound of vice, disobedience, and error, was the Albi-

<sup>1</sup> Pet. Ven. contr. Petrob. bibl. Clun. p. 1122.

sian heresy.<sup>1</sup> The licentious soldiery<sup>2</sup> cared but little for theological disputes, but understood too well the value of license not to profess themselves Henricians ; and the infatuated people burned crucifixes, profaned the churches, flogged priests, and imprisoned monks, or compelled them to marry. The only way in which this terrible and spreading evil could be met, was by sending missionaries to preach in this centre itself of heresy. St. Bernard himself was sent with Alberic, cardinal bishop of Ostia. The cardinal preceded him, and arrived at Albi, the stronghold of the heretics, two days before him ; but the people had but little reverence for cardinals and legates of the Holy See ; a short distance from the city, Alberic was met by a quaint procession of men mounted on asses, and women playing on cymbals ; and when the bells of the church rung for mass, not thirty of the faithful attended. When St. Bernard arrived, the city poured out of the gates to meet him ; the countenance and figure of the saint struck them at once, and the fickle people received him with shouts of joy. But St. Bernard looked upon them sternly, and they saw no more of him that day. The morrow was the feast of St. Peter, and the great church was crowded with people, so that some of them were compelled to stand outside the porch. St. Bernard looked around on the upturned visages beneath, and said, I had come to sow good seed, but I find the ground already sown with

<sup>1</sup> St. Bernard In Cant. Serm. 66, connects a similar set of heretics with the Manichees from the similarity of their doctrines, though ignorant of their historical origin. Evervinus, in his letter to the saint, distinguishes two sets of heretics, one much more doctrinal than the other.—Vid. St. Bern. Ed. Ben. vol. i. 1489.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep. Goffr. ap. S. Bernardi op. ed. Ben. vol. ii. p. 1195.*

corrupt seed. But now will I detail to you each kind of seed, see ye which ye will have. He then drew out the catholic faith side by side with that of Henry. There was no need of premise and conclusion ; arguments would have been thrown away on the people of Albi. The juxta-position was enough ; a thrill ran through the whole assembly, and when St. Bernard asked them which seed they would choose, the hearts of the people were already won back to the church. Do penance then, said the holy abbot, as many of you as are polluted, and return to the unity of the church of Christ : and he bade them hold up their hands in token of catholic unity ; and all with joy raised up their right hands to heaven. And this, says the faithful monk, who was an eye-witness of this scene, in his letter written to Clairvaux, is to be preferred to all his other miracles. He went every where from place to place preaching the word of God, and before he had left the country, heresy had every where fled before his face. He afterwards addressed them letters full of tenderness, and the remembrance of his visit for some time kept heresy under. If this corrupt people had continued to remember the good abbot who had ventured among them in their wildest mood, how much blood and misery would have been spared ; but at all events, St. Bernard stopped for a time this miserable evil, which afterwards threatened the very existence of Christendom. Alas ! a few favourable circumstances, a corrupt court and a corrupt clergy, and the old and mysterious Manicheism of the country, produced an open heresy in the south of France, but there were all over Europe, men who hated the church because she came across their plans or their vices, and who took advantage of the cowardice or worldliness of churchmen to oppress her ; and so it

ever will be till the end of time. But God raises up His saints to the help of His bride, and it is pleasing amidst the melancholy picture, to follow the steps of such a man as St. Bernard.

We are now fast approaching Citeaux, where we are again to meet Gilbert, and where he is to meet St. Bernard and Pope Eugenius. St. Bernard probably left the south of France in the autumn of 1147 ; soon after which Eugenius determined to visit again the scenes in which he had passed the happiest days of life. The general chapter of Citeaux took place as usual on the 14th of September. Hither also came Gilbert, after so many years, in which he hardly crossed the bounds of the parish of Sempringham ; he now found himself in the midst of the most august assembly in Christendom, in the company of the first men of the day.<sup>1</sup> More than three hundred abbots of the Cistercian order were sitting around, with the head of Christendom in the midst. St. Stephen had long since been gathered to his rest, and his successor, Rainaldus, presided over the chapter. St. Bernard was there now in the decline of life, with an enfeebled body and an untired soul, the centre of the affairs not only of the order, but of the

<sup>1</sup> There seems every reason to suppose that this chapter at Citeaux was in 1147. It appears from a document quoted in Pagi's notes to Baronius, Tom. xix. p. 4, that he was there on the 18th of that month ; and he could not have been there again next year, as Pagi and Muratori suppose, because he had left France in June, and the chapter was always in September. Again, Goffridus, in his life of St. Bernard, seems to imply, that it was in the same year that he entered France, cum introiset Gallias—eodem anno apud Cistercium affuit. Vit. S. Bern. iv. 7. His visit to Clairvaux however took place next year, for it is expressly stated to have been after the council of Rheims. *Ibid.* ii. 8.

whole of the Christian world. He indeed was unconscious, except when at times it came across him that men did think a great deal of him, and it puzzled him much, "for how could so many great men be wrong? and yet it was true that he was an unprofitable servant." Thus he spoke to his friends in private, and there he was with all eyes upon him, yet too much intent on God to know it. Gilbert was not the only strange who came with his petition; for another comes with similar request. He is a man of quaint figure and uncomely features: his stature is short, and his plain face is furrowed every where with deep wrinkles. When he smiles, he twists his body and raises his shoulders up to his head in a strange way; but his eyes are piercing, and seem to look through those who speak with him; and altogether his face was not unpleasing, for, though emaciated and hard-featured from exposure to the air, the countenance had a strange mixture of sweetness and sternness. This was Stephen, who had lately established a double monastery at Obazina, in the diocese of Limoges, not far from Tulle. It was a wild glen, through which ran a small stream, and all around it was a thick wood, and high rocks, through which flowed a larger stream, called Courreze; the monastery itself was built on a jutting rock, round the base of which rolled the clear water of the rapid river. It was a rough place, and yet the abbot externally was as rough a man. His discipline was stern; if one of the novices but dropped his book, he received a box on the ear, which sounded through the church. One Saturday evening, the monks who had

<sup>1</sup> Vit. St. Bern. v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Baluz. Misc. vol. i. p. 169.

had charge of the bakehouse, after compline, when all were in bed, felt so happy that their week was over, that they became unusually merry. They were tilting at each other with sticks, and amusing themselves, when all of a sudden they espied the dark figure of the abbot, who had come up unawares, and had been watching their proceedings. The poor monks immediately took to flight, knowing well what a severe punishment would ensue, and next day they took care to accuse themselves of this fault before another rose to be beforehand with them, and Stephen seeing their fright by their pale faces and haggard countenances, saw that they had already suffered enough, and excused them. And yet Stephen had a gentle heart ; he wept with those whom he saw were frightened at his severe discipline, and would not allow them to pine away. The nobles of the country were cruel and tyrannical, men who oppressed the poor, and before these steel-clad ruffians would Stephen stand in his coarse black habit, in behalf of the wretched. Once a whole country side was desolated by a baron, because another noble, to whom the ground belonged, had made away with a favourite hawk ; Stephen goes to the baron, and promises to find the hawk if he will but go away in peace. Then Stephen set out in the depth of winter, on foot, to the nobleman's castle, and when he got there, was refused admittance, as might have been expected ; then he trudged back in the snow, discouraged, but not in despair. He soon set out again on the same quest, and by God's help, he was at this time successful, and he came back with the beautiful hawk upon his wrist, and restored it to its owner. At another time when a fearful insurrection of the peasantry against their lords left the *fields uncultivated*, and a famine ensued, he fed

thousands at the gates of the abbey. He now came to put his monastery under the Cistercian rule ; his fame had come before him, and Pope Eugenius himself presented him to the lord Abbot of Citeaux, and Rainaldus in turn presented him to the chapter, with an eulogium, which was very complimentary to his piety, but by no means so to his personal appearance. He took him by the hand, and said, See my lords and brethren, here is an abbot, little in body, short in stature, contemptible in garb, ugly in face ; but, whatever there is of him, be assured is full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith. He then named his request, and the Pope's recommendation to the abbots ; at first they murmured, for it was against the rule of the order to receive a community of women. But when Rainaldus promised that this should be remedied, they could not refuse a request, backed by the Pope's authority, and the monastery of Obazina was received into the filiation of Citeaux. The Cistercians were right in accepting the rule of this monastery, for they improved it by their government. It partook of the rude and almost humourous simplicity of Stephen himself. The poor nuns in their simplicity, when they looked on their glen and the rocky mountains which bounded it, believed that all the world with its cities and magnificent towns lay just outside the woody mountain tops. Boys under five years old were brought up in the convent of the nuns, and were then removed into that of the monks. As one little boy was crossing, under the guidance of a monk, the steep path between the two monasteries, the brother asked him how he liked the women with whom he had been living. Women ! said the child ; I have never seen any women. Those *with whom* I have been living were called sisters.

And this child was a type of the rude simplicity and unreasoning purity of the monasteries now delivered into the hands of Citeaux.

So far Gilbert's mission seemed to prosper ; a double monastery had been received into the order of Citeaux. He had an audience of Pope Eugenius, and laid his case before him. The Pope was much interested in him ; he wanted news from England, for the church was in a miserable state in a country torn with civil war, in which churches and abbeys were turned into fortresses, and the clergy were mercilessly laid under contributions. What was worse the bishops themselves had but too often turned soldiers, and with their armed bands harried the poor peasants, and plundered the fruit of their lands. The bishop of Hereford alone is praised as being a courageous defender of the church's rites. Besides all this, the conduct of Stephen gave Eugenius much cause for alarm. He and his uncle, Henry of Winchester, were in no good odour at Rome, since the new order of things under the rule of Eugenius.<sup>1</sup> The Pope had therefore deprived Henry of the legatine office, and had transferred it to Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury. St. Bernard was evidently aiming at purifying the English church of secular prelates. But a short time before, at Paris, he had procured the deposition from the see of York of Stephen's nephew and nominee, the same to whom God afterwards gave grace to become St. William. All this made the presence of Gilbert most interesting to Eugenius, and he soon learned to love his simplicity and quiet energy. When, however, Gilbert talked to him about giving up the conduct of his order to the Cis-

<sup>1</sup> *John of Hexham*, in ann. 1147.

tercians, he found him and the chapter decidedly averse to it. The order would not undertake the government of a female convent. In the case of Obazina, it was possible to separate them, but at Sempringham, the very object of the institute, was the spiritual direction of nunneries, and the one could not exist without the other. The chapter therefore altogether declined Gilbert's offer. This was a sad disappointment to him, for the anxious charge was still upon his shoulders, and he knew not how to bear it. The only thing to be done was to associate other priests with him in the government of the nunnery. He did not yet go back to Sempringham ; the events of this year of his life are obscurely told, but it appears incidentally that he remained in France the greater part of the year 1148.<sup>1</sup> His charge was now becoming more anxious than ever, and he probably remained behind to learn the rule of the canons of St. Augustine, for he now determined to join to each convent of his order a certain number of canons, who were to be the spiritual guides of the nuns.<sup>2</sup> At this time in Burgundy, in the same province as Citeaux, the canons of St. Maurice had been reformed ; again, instead of the turbulent secular canons of St. Genevieve, those of St. Victor were gradually substituted ; and the year before, in his journey to Toulouse, St. Bernard had, by his burning words, converted the unruly clerks of the cathedral of Bordeaux, who for seven years had undergone the sentence of excommunication rather

<sup>1</sup> He was at the general chapter of Citeaux, in September, 1147, and he was also at Clairvaux, when St. Malachi arrived four or five days before St. Luke's day, 1148. He may indeed have gone back to England, and made another journey to France, but his biographer only mentions one journey.

<sup>2</sup> Geroch ap. Baluz Misc. ii. 207.

than become canons regular.<sup>1</sup> And much need had the cathedrals of reform, for in many places the old discipline had gone out, and the canons were living as they pleased, in houses of their own, having entirely given up the old monastic principle ; and they boldly maintained that the rule of Aix-la-Chapelle had tacitly allowed this disorder.<sup>2</sup> But a general feeling was growing up against this practice, and Eugenius therefore warmly approved of Gilbert's plan. These were happy days for Gilbert, which he spent with St. Bernard, who loved him well. Eugenius too loved him, and said, that if he had but known him before, he would have nominated him to the see of York. This was a fortunate escape for Gilbert, for often must Henry Murdach have regretted the cloister of Fountains, after he had been consecrated by the hands of the Pope himself at Treves. His pallium hung heavy about his neck, when he found himself opposed to Stephen and his son Eustace, petulant, so thought cardinal Gregory,<sup>3</sup> as the goat, without the nobleness of the lion. Gilbert found that he had weight enough to bear in the rule of his own order, for which he was now preparing, and which Pope Eugenius formally conferred upon him before he left France. Probably Gilbert was at Clairvaux, when Eugenius, on his way back to turbulent Italy, came to take a last look at that place where he had first known peace, and had spent so many happy days. He must needs see St. Bernard and Clairvaux, before he again crossed the Alps, never to see them more. As he wound along with his suite,

<sup>1</sup> Goff. Epist. vit. St. Bern. lib. vi. ad fin.

<sup>2</sup> Geroch. p. 223. This must be what the author means by the rule of King Louis.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, Ep. 4. 14.

the narrowing valley, where he had so often borne the heat and cold as a common labourer, the great bell of the abbey rung, and all the brethren assembled in the choir ; then the whole convent came out to meet him, St. Bernard first, with his pastoral staff, and the novices last, two and two. Then when he came to the abbey gates, all knelt before him, and when they rose, St. Bernard gave him holy water, and kissed his hand, and then with chanting, all passed into the abbey. Eugenius wept abundantly, and when he spoke to the monks, telling them that he was their fellow and brother, his words were broken by sobs. He wore the white cuculla day and night, as the rule prescribed, and under the rich purple hangings and embroidered coverlet of his bed, was the common straw pallet of the order. His suite was too large to allow him to remain long at Clairvaux, and with a sad heart he set out again to cross the Alps.

Before he left Clairvaux, Gilbert saw another illustrious personage. This was St. Malachi ; he came all the way from the north of Ireland, hoping to see Eugenius at Clairvaux, but when he arrived, five days before the feast of St. Luke, he found that the pope had gone away, and was even then not far from Rome. King Stephen had detained him, with his usual obstinacy ; he was afraid of Rome, and would not suffer any bishop to cross the sea to the council of Rheims. The archbishop of Canterbury alone contrived to cross the channel in a crazy vessel, but when he returned from France, Stephen drove him into exile, and could only be brought to reason by laying an interdict on his lands. It was a part of this quarrel which prevented St. Malachi from reaching Clairvaux in time to see *the pope*, then on the point of leaving France. His

had been a long and a weary life, for he had been the reformer of the Irish church. With a handful of brethren he had renewed the old monastery of Benchor, and had built up a church of wood, which St. Bernard calls "a work of the Scots, and handsome enough." He had had hard work among wild Irish chieftains and their clans; once he narrowly escaped martyrdom; their savage eyes glared at him for a moment, but his presence disarmed them, and he, who was to give the signal, durst not do it. His was the most unruly diocese in Christendom; it had been for nine generations an appanage of a chieftain's family; eight had successively borne the title and swayed the power of the metropolitan see, being all the while no more than laymen. The last archbishop was a married man, but he was really consecrated, and on his death-bed, by his wife, he sent his crosier to St. Malachi. He left him an heritage of toil; on foot, with a few clerks, he braved the bitter cold, the deep bogs, and the rough roads of his country; and what was far worse, he battled with his half-heathen countrymen. He had to put down savage customs, unbridled concubinage, and lawless men chafing sorely at an ecclesiastical yoke. The first stone church which the saint built, raised an outburst of barbarian fury; they said that their bishop had turned Frenchman, and had ceased to be a true-hearted Scot, with his new-fangled architecture.<sup>1</sup> At length he had seen the fruits of his toilsome life; church and state had been reformed by him; the civil law had taken the place of savage customs; churches were rebuilt, and priests ordained; confirmation was administered, and matrimony enforced. Innocent II. had

<sup>1</sup> Gallus non Scotus. St. Bern. Vit. St. Malachiæ. St. Bernard calls him *only Bishop*, because he had not received the pallium.

delayed giving him the pall of an archbishop on account of some informality ; but to make amends, he took his mitre off his own head and put it upon the head of St. Malachi. He had now come to Clairvaux to receive the pall from the hands of Eugenius. Some of his clergy had accompanied him down to the sea-shore, and made him promise to come back to Ireland, and had watched him with straining eyes embark on board his vessel. He did fulfil his promise, for contrary winds drove him back to Ireland, but they never saw his face again. He had always wished to die at Clairvaux, in the arms of his friend St. Bernard, and now he was to have his wish, for the days in which Gilbert was with him were the last that he spent upon earth. St. Bernard vividly describes the joy of this intercourse. "How joyous a holiday dawned upon us when he came into Clairvaux. With how quick and bounding a step, did I, though infirm and trembling, run to meet him ! With what joy did I rush to kiss him ! With what joyful arms did I embrace this grace sent me from heaven ! And then what joyful days did I pass with him, and yet how few !" It was in these last days that Gilbert saw him, and he was admitted to a familiar intercourse with these great saints. He was not however present at the closing scene of the life of St. Malachi. It was now high time that he should return home ; and at the latter end of October, he set out to go back to Sempringham. Both St. Bernard and St. Malachi loved him well ;<sup>1</sup> each of them gave him his staff, that he might take a memorial of them back to England ; and St. Bernard

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert's biographer says, that he alone was present when the two saints, by their prayers, worked a miracle, but what it was is unknown.

gave him a stole and a maniple. He went on his way to the work which had been appointed for him ; there was still a great deal for him to do on earth ; but on the second of November, All Souls' day, St. Malachi died, and was buried in St. Mary's chapel at Clairvaux.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *The Canons of Sempringham.*

THERE were many persons ready to welcome Gilbert when he got back to England ; all, who before he went to France were anxious to give portions of ground to endow a monastery of his institute, were more than ever disposed to assist him now that St. Bernard's name was added to his own.<sup>1</sup> In the two years after his return, he must have been wholly occupied in founding houses of his order ; Alexander of Lincoln died before he left England, but Robert de Chesney, his successor, was blamed by his historian, for injuring the revenues of his diocese by his liberality to the order of Sempringham, so much did he love Gilbert and his institute.<sup>2</sup> Nay, when Chicksand had been founded by the countess of Albemarle for the Gilbertines, and she was living there with her nuns, news were brought her that her son was dead, and that his kinsmen, without consulting her, were bearing his body to Walden priory. In her frantic grief, she ordered a band of armed men to bring the body by force to her, at Chicksand, that it might lie in

<sup>1</sup> Innocent III., in a bull of Confirmation addressed to the priory of Alvingham, says, that the order was instituted by " the holy Gilbert and the blessed Bernard." Monast. Angl. vii. 961.

<sup>2</sup> Wharton Ang. Sac. ii. 417.

the church of the nuns ; and had not the knights who accompanied the body ridden by the side of the coffin with drawn swords, it would have been carried away. The enthusiasm for the Gilbertine order spread beyond Lincolnshire, and the immediate neighbourhood of Sempringham, into Yorkshire, where two houses were founded in 1150, Watton and Malton. The first priory founded, was that of Sempringham itself ; and Gilbert of Ghent gave the land on which the house was built.<sup>1</sup>

“ The nobles of England, says his biographer, earls and barons, seeing and approving the work of the Lord, gave to the holy father Gilbert, many lands and possessions ; first in so doing, was Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, and lastly, king Henry II.” Many of these monasteries were situated in Lincolnshire, in solitary islands formed by rivers, and among the reeds and willows of the marshy grounds. Gilbert’s name was known all over England ; he appears in the chronicles of the time, side by side with kings and princes. William of Newbridge mentions him as a man “ really wonderful, and of singular skill in the direction of females, conscious of his own purity, and relying on grace from on high,” and his name was mentioned with reverence in the holiest cloisters. St. Aelred preached of him to his monks, and called him “ the holy father Gilbert, a man venerable and to be mentioned with the highest honour.”<sup>2</sup> The contemporaries of Gilbert must have been conscious of some substantial benefit derived from him, who was to all appearance only a retiring and simple parish priest ; for many years after he

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert did not give the land free of service ; his descendant, another Gilbert, gave it in *eleemosynam*, i. e. free ecclesiastical tenure. For an explanation of the term, see *Constitutions of Clarendon*, c. 9. where it is opposed to *laicus feudus*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Aelred, Sermon 2. in *Isaiæ cap. xiv.*

came back from France, he was not even a monk, and had not received the habit at the time of which we are writing. And this reverence is the more remarkable, because it continued after his death, soon after which his order degenerated ; nay, it showed the germs of this degeneracy even in his life-time. Now that the institute has, by the addition of the canons, attained its perfection, it will be right to give a more minute account of it. We shall then see what was the benefit which the world owed to Gilbert, notwithstanding the partial failure of his work.

The peculiarity of the order consisted in the institution of a certain number of canons to be the spiritual guides of nuns. Among the Premonstrants, there were nuns as well as canons, but then the nuns were an after-thought ; while in the case of the White Gilbertines, as they were called, the original institute began with the religious women, and all the rest grew up around them, and were established for their use. In Gilbert's original intention, every house of nuns was to have seven canons connected with it, who were to be the directors of the nuns ; so that every Gilbertine priory consisted in fact of three monasteries, one for nuns, another of canons, and a third of lay-brethren. This mode of government had, in a manner, been forced upon him since the Cistercians refused to help him. The great problem in monastic government, was the jurisdiction to which they were to submit. This was met, as has been said elsewhere, by the formation of congregations, first the Cluniac, and then the Cistercian.<sup>1</sup> If this was necessary in the case of monks, it was much more indispensable in nunneries. A convent of women is necessarily dependent on men for the administration of

<sup>1</sup> Life of St. Stephen, p. 155.

the sacraments ; they must, therefore, necessarily be under external direction ; and in the choice of it should not be left to their own caprice. The want of external discipline had ruined many a nunnery. A number of houses were to be found, the inmates of which, calling themselves Canonesses, could give very little account of themselves, and were really relaxed nuns of the order of St. Benedict.<sup>1</sup> As late as the twelfth century, councils were forced to take notice of nuns who wore rich furs, of sables, martins, and ermine, whose fingers were covered with rings of gold, and their long tresses curled or platted ; another speaks of disorderly nuns, who, while they ought to sleep and take their meals together in a dormitory and refectory, lived each in her own house without any restraint, and receiving whom she would.<sup>2</sup> Such nunneries as these were really nothing more than alms-houses for unmarried women. The idea of the Gilbertine order was to obviate this difficulty, by joining to the nunneries an order of canons for the spiritual direction of the nuns.

Females require direction in a different way from men. It is the unruly intellect of man which leads him into error, while a woman errs from disorganized affections and untamed feelings ; and, what is most pitiable to think upon, often those who aim highest, have the most terrible and signal fall. She who moves along the beaten path of life without being either very good or very bad, is in little danger of fanaticism ; while she who is placed above ordinary ties and affections, and strives to fix her desires on God alone, finds at once a class of temptations of which others have no concep-

<sup>1</sup> Helyot, *Ordres Mon.* vol. ii. p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Council of London, 1139, 2nd Lateran council. Vid. Geroch. quoted above, p. 59, and council of Rheims.

tion. The devil placed before our Lord temptations so subtle, that we can hardly tell the meaning of them, or discover how it would have been sin to yield to them. Again, in the unfathomable mystery of those words, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? spoken upon the cross by Him who was Very God, it is possible to gather that the soul, most closely united to God, may be deprived of the consciousness of His presence in an incomprehensible way. All these are temptations, pressing upon the highest souls, of a kind quite different from those which beset the path of commonplace christians. And to withstand these, it requires an implicit faith, and an utter resignation of the will, which very few possess. Hence, the wild and terrible forms of fanaticism which have appeared from time to time in persons, who, with proper guidance, might have been Sisters of Charity or contemplative nuns. On the other hand, by the sweet and gentle ways of holy obedience, a character is formed of a nature distinct from any other, and which no austerities can alone bestow. Of course, God in His mercy can guide peaceful and holy souls through any difficulties even without these aids, but it is dangerous to be without them, for who can stand in the hour of trial when it comes across the soul that after all she may be contemplating herself instead of God, and all her feelings may be illusion? A gentle voice is needed to bid the soul wait in darkness till God give her light, as He assuredly will do, sooner or later.

On the other hand, corresponding to these trials, there are joys in contemplation which ordinary souls cannot know. They are described by those who have felt them with a substantive clearness, which shows even to those who have never felt them, that there

is a deep philosophy in the cross which simple and crucified souls can know, but which is beyond the reach of the mere student, however learned he may be. We are so tied down to things of sense, that we can only aim at immaterial and invisible things through sensible objects ; spiritual things can only be discerned by spirit, and therefore can but be understood by us indirectly, till our bodies, after the blessed resurrection, become spiritual. But it is possible to conceive that there is a way of seeing the invisible, analogous to, and yet totally distinct in kind from, the perceptions of sense ; and for a short time, and in a small degree, God has vouchsafed such an opening of the invisible world to His saints on earth. Few, indeed, there are to whom such a grace is given, but there are many states short of this to which more ordinary souls may attain, remembering, all the while, that of the highest, as well as the lowest, charity is the essence, and that which alone gives them value. Obedience to authority, which comes to us in the place of God, and humility, are the steps by which the Holy Spirit thus exalts souls dead to the world and to themselves. It was to produce in the soul these virtues that the Gilbertine canons were instituted, and what were the general results of the system may be gathered from one case which is confessedly an extraordinary one. " In one of the monasteries, says St. Aelred, which, under the venerable father Gilbert, are daily sending up to heaven plentiful fruits of chastity, there was once, and perhaps may be still, a holy virgin, and she had so expelled from her breast all love of the world and carnal affections, all care for bodily wants and outward anxiety, that with a burning soul she loathed earthly things, and longed after heavenly. And sometimes it happened, that when her

mind was occupied in her wonted prayer, a mysterious and wondrous sweetness would come over her and put an end to all the movements of the soul, to all quick-coming thoughts, nay, even all those spiritual thoughts which concerned her friends. Then her soul, in a manner bidding adieu to all worldly burdens, would be rapt above itself ; it would be caught up by a strange ineffable and incomprehensible light, so that it saw nothing else but That which is, and which is the being of all. Nor was this a bodily light or any likeness of a bodily thing ; it was not extended nor shed abroad, so that it could be seen everywhere ; without being contained itself, it contained all things, and that in a wonderful and ineffable manner, just as Being contains all that is, and truth whatever is true. When, therefore, this light was shed around her, then she began to know Christ no longer after the flesh, for the breath of her nostrils, Christ Jesus had led her into the truth itself. After lying a considerable time in this trance, the sisters could only with difficulty bring her back to her bodily senses, by shaking her. This happened several times, and they entreated her to explain what took place in these trances. Then began the others to long to attain to the height of this vision : wherefore, they strove to withdraw their minds from all worldly cares and anxieties ; and by tears and continued prayers many obtained the same grace, so that among the sisters, many were, even against their will, plunged into this light. There was there in the convent a nun of consummate good sense, and she, knowing that it is not right to trust to every spirit, thought that this state was to be attributed to disease or fantastic illusions, and as much as she could, tried to dissuade the sisters from having these visions frequently. One day she asked

the Superioress why no such thing happened to herself, and she received for answer, Because thou dost not believe us, nor love in others that virtue which thou hast not thyself. Then the nun answered, Do thou pray to God for me, that if this be from Him, the same thing may happen to me. And when they had prayed for some days to no purpose, she asked the same question of the Superioress, who answered, Thou must renounce all the things of this world, and affections for every mortal, and employ thyself in thinking about God alone. What, said she, am I not to pray for my friends and benefactors? Then, answered the Superioress, when thou wouldest ascend by contemplation to the higher powers of thy soul, thou must commend and entrust to God all whom thou lovest; and as though thou wert quitting this world, bidding adieu to every creature, raise up thy soul to the sight of Him whom thou lovest. She, however, still believed not, but begged of her to pray yet more, that if these things came from God, she should receive what she desired. Still she said, I would not have my soul so rapt from the body and raised on high, that the remembrance of all things, and above all, of my friends, should be wiped away from my mind; I shall be satisfied to know whether these things be of God. Now, on the day of Pentecost, when she was tossing about with anxious thoughts, the light of which we have spoken was shed upon her, so that she was wafted up into it in an unspeakable manner, and was raised on high. Then unable to bear with her weak vision that inaccessible light which was beaming upon her, she prayed that her soul should be recalled, as far as it might, to the contemplation of the passion of the Lord. Then, though she had before seen in a rapid glance that which is very being, she was

suffered to descend from this lofty vision to a lower one, and was transferred in spirit to that vision of the Passion, and saw in the spirit Jesus hanging on the cross, pierced with the nails, smitten through with the lance, and the blood flowing through the five wounds, and Him looking on herself with a most tender look. Then bursting into tears, and repenting, she begged pardon of her sisters, and declared herself unworthy of this light." There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy, and we might have learned this from him who was carried up into the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body he knew not, and heard things which human words could no more express than the eye can hear, or the ear see.

And who were these in whom God showed forth these wonders? They were not persons sitting with their hands across all day following the fancy or the feeling of the moment; their vestments were not long and flowing, nor their veils elegantly disposed about their foreheads; their churches were not magnificent, nor did beautiful strains of devotional music float from the pealing organ through their long-drawn cloisters. They were simply little, quiet looking nuns of St. Benedict; the wimple which enveloped their head and throat was plain and coarse, and so was their veil; and even the ample cuculla or long white<sup>1</sup> mantle which they wore in choir was not to sweep along the ground,<sup>2</sup> "for they who delight in this or in beauty of apparel without doubt are rejected of God."<sup>3</sup> For the winter they had a tippet of rough sheep-skin, and a cap lined with white lamb's wool, for it was very cold when they

<sup>1</sup> Cuculla alba, Reg. ap. Dugdale vii. p. lxxix. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Panni quibus capita earum involvuntur nigri erunt et grossi, v. Reg. p. 79. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

rose in the night and went into the church, when the wind blew across the fens of Lincolnshire, or the chill mist rose from the waters of the river which surrounded their little islands. Instead of being idle, during all the hours when in the Benedictine or Cistercian rule the monks were working in the fields, they were preparing the wool from their own sheep, baking<sup>1</sup> or washing, or cutting out the clothes of the canons for the work of the lay-sisters, or cooking for themselves and the whole community. At other times they all sat together in the cloister, some of them reading learned books in a learned language, for there were literate ladies among them ; but all, whether poring over homely English or majestic Latin, sat in perfect silence, and it was especially enjoined that there were to be no cross looks, but all were to have a cheerful and sweet countenance as became sisters. Even on the great feast-days, when ordinarily exempt from work, if the poor lay-sisters were over-burdened, the nuns were to quit their books, or even their prayers, and to help them. No music was allowed in their churches, but only grave and simple chaunts, like the Cistercians, except that they could not of course, as in the Cistercian rule, forbid womanish voices ; and the chaunts proceeding in the stillness of the night from so many female voices must have been most sweet and beautiful. No great quantity of wax lights were allowed in the church, and altogether the same Cistercian simplicity was observed in all the details of the service. In one instance only this simplicity was relaxed to condescend to the lay sisters ; in a Cistercian church, instead of elaborate sculpture and canopied niches, no image was

<sup>1</sup> *Moniales de pistrino, Reg. p. lxxviii. 16.*

allowed but the one crucifix on the altar. But if an image of the "blessed Virgin Mary" were given to the convent, it might be given to the altar of the sisters, to remind them of her perpetual virginity, which they were to emulate. And even when the canons and the nuns made processions round the cloister, on the greatest days in the year, so little was picturesque effect aimed at, that curtains were hung round on the columns of the arches, lest the brethren and the nuns should catch glimpses of each other as the procession with cross and banner wound round the corners of the choir, or might be seen through the interstices of the windows. Meditation was the soul of the order ; the nuns rose about two o'clock in the morning, like the Cistercians, and when matins were over, all who chose remained behind in the church, or glided in afterwards from the cloister ; and as day dawned, the first light of morning saw them still upon their knees pouring out their hearts before God, and meditating on the adorable mysteries of the faith, or interceding for the world without, and for the friends whom they had left there. At all times, day or night, when they were not at work or in the office, they might go into the church and pray. Even those who could not read or join in the office could meditate, and though they were set to work while the others were reading, yet they were allowed to enter the church if they would.<sup>1</sup> If to all this we join the austerity of the Cistercian rule, that is, the unmitigated rule of St. Benedict, there will be but little room left for romance or sentiment. Unmurmuring

<sup>1</sup> This seems to have been the distinction between the nuns who could not read and the lay-sisters. The rule calls these nuns *sanctimoniales laicæ*, while what we call lay-sisters are there called *sorores* in opposition to the *sanctimoniales*.

obedience to superiors, whether the prioress or the canon, as spiritual director, and a perfect resignation of the will were the necessary conditions of being a nun at all.

The canons who had the spiritual care of the nuns, were very different from the old Benedictine or from the Cistercian monks ; the monk was not by any means necessarily a learned man ; on the contrary, his business was to labour with his own hands to get his living, so that he had much more to do with gardening and digging than with books. But the canon was necessarily a clerk and a student ; Gilbert's first canons were taken from among his scholars, whom he had instructed in all the learning of Paris. Canons in the middle of the eleventh century were by no means always reputable personages : the old reform of St. Chrodegang, and the regulations of Aix-la-Chapelle had died away, and the canons were in many instances in a most corrupt state. The vehement remonstrances of St. Peter Damian had their effect, and the attention of the supreme pontiffs were drawn to this enormous evil, so that after the second Lateran council, reforms were continually made in the old canons, and new congregations set up. The institution of monks instead of the canons in several of our cathedrals was a portion of this movement ; and the canons of St. Victor of Paris and the Premonstrants were all connected with it. The second Lateran council ordered all canons to take St. Augustine's rule, and from this time they were called Augustinian. This rule consists of an adaptation of St. Augustine's 109th letter<sup>1</sup> to the condition of can-

<sup>1</sup> It is a question whether this letter (the 211th in the Benedictine edition) or the two sermons *de moribus clericorum*, is the rule pointed out in the Lateran council. But the letter is *what is probably* meant by Gilbert.

ons instead of nuns. This letter is what is meant when the rule of St. Augustine is mentioned in Gilbert's rule ; it is however so very general in its regulations that canons were not necessarily under a discipline so severe as that of monks. The chief regulation consisted in living together and giving up property ; but besides this in particular places a stricter discipline was in force. Thus Gilbert filled up St. Augustine's outline from other sources, but principally from the Cistercian rule. They were of the new order of monks of the twelfth century, who scandalized<sup>1</sup> the ancient Benedictines, Cluniacs and canons, by wearing white instead of the old sober black of the monastic orders. And in this they were followers of the Cistercians and Premonstrants ; they were, like them, the growth of the age of St. Bernard, and had more subjective religion, so to speak, than appeared on the surface in the older monasteries. This of course is but a question of degree, for the Christian, in every case, looks beyond himself at Him who is the object of his faith ; but yet it is true that the Gilbertines, like the Cistercians, preferred the "usefulness of wholesome meditation,"<sup>2</sup> to beautiful paintings and sculptures. In their habit they had more of the canon than of the monk, though indeed the white scapular for labour had something monastic in it ; but the tippet of rough sheep-skin over the black tunic looks like the original aumuce of the canon, and they wore a white pallium or mantle, lined with lamb's wool, instead of the monk's cuculla. At mass and on feast days, they laid aside the coarse mantle, and wore a white cope of linen, like the cuculla of the monk, ex-

<sup>1</sup> Vid. Orderic Vit. lib. iii. p. 711.

<sup>2</sup> Reg. p. l. 15.

cept that it had no sleeves ; in this cope they were buried, for it was the proper habit of canons. In the relations between the canons and the nuns, Gilbert had an eye to his old office in Alexander of Lincoln's court. As it was the theory that all the priest's power in hearing confessions emanated from the Bishop, so the prior of Sempringham, as master of the whole order, gave license to hear confessions ;<sup>1</sup> and as the diocese had a penitentiary, so there was a sacerdos confessionis, who confessed the nuns generally. Besides this, the intention was, that every convent of nuns should have at least seven canons attached to it, who said mass and had the ordinary spiritual direction of the nuns, under the authority of the prior.<sup>2</sup> The whole of these regulations were so managed, that the canons and the nuns never saw each other, except when a nun was at the point of death, and the priest entered to administer extreme unction, and to commend her soul into the hands of God. The nuns were unseen when they made their confessions, or received the Holy Sacrament, for which purposes a grating was constructed. The time of death alone brought the canons and nuns together. There were two separate churches, and across that of the nuns was built a screen ; when a choir-sister died, her body, dressed in her habit, was laid before the altar, so that the canons might come and chaunt the service for the

<sup>1</sup> *Priores ordinis nostri de licentia magistri generalem habent auctoritatem omnium canonicorum confessiones audiendi, Reg. p. xxxii. 5.*

<sup>2</sup> This does not appear so much from the Gilbertine rule itself, as from the confirmation of the rule by Innocent III. *Adjacimus ut unicuique domui vestri ordinis sanctimonialium canonici præponantur quibus animarum cura, pro dispositione prioris imminet.*

dead about her.<sup>1</sup> The whole convent in procession, accompanied any one of its members to the grave, whether canon or nun, lay-brother or sister.

We have now got the whole of Gilbert's institute complete, as far as regards each individual convent, but there is another and most important portion, and that is the jurisdiction of the monasteries among themselves. In this respect, it must be confessed that the rule was defective. Gilbert was at great disadvantage ; when the Cistercians refused to take the institute into their hands, he was forced to construct for himself a complicated system out of the rules of various monastic orders. The Cistercians again were said to have two houses in every one of their monasteries, one of monks, the other of lay-brethren ; Gilbert had four, one of canons, another of nuns, a third of lay-brethren, and a fourth of lay-sisters. Part of these rules he gathered from the Cistercians, and part seems to come from the Premonstrants, who had just been established in England.<sup>2</sup> The result of the whole is an intricate system, which leaves a feeling of indistinctness on the mind of the reader. The principal difficulty in the order is evidently the management of the lay-brethren. In the Cistercian order, the monks worked so much them-

<sup>1</sup> P. 91. 1.—There is some obscurity in the way in which these churches are mentioned, but the church of the nuns is distinctly named, Reg. p. l. 17. and that of the canons, xlix. 14. It would seem that the church of Sempringham had been turned into a conventual church, while that of Tirington remained a parish church. At least the latter is not mentioned in the list of the possessions of the order, in Innocent's confirmation.

<sup>2</sup> The *Circatores* of the Gilbertines seem to be derived from the order of the Premonstrants, the provinces of which were called *Circariæ*.

selves, and were so numerous, that the lay-brethren had comparatively a light office. But the Gilbertine canons were few, and were students, so that the brethren had nearly the whole work to perform for all four communities. Besides which it should be remembered that the canons were an after-thought, and an unexpected addition to the labour of the brethren. In a future chapter, it will be found that this was a most serious evil ; the practical working of the whole will then come before us, and the reader will be better able to judge of the defects of this portion of the institute.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### *Gilbert and St. Thomas.*

WHEN in the year 1150, Gilbert founded so many houses of his order, he might fairly have considered himself as an old soldier, who had won a title to rest. He was then between sixty and seventy years old ; but he had yet many years of life to go through, and they were to be the least peaceful of all. He had hitherto remained in quiet at Sempringham, but now another hand was to bind him and lead him in his old old age whither it would. From the first time that he set sail on the channel, and touched the shores of France, he was to have trouble and vexation, and tedious journeys to and fro. He was at peace when he was the parish priest of Sempringham, with only seven holy virgins to rule, all of whom he had known from their childhood. But now the Pope had made him the head of his order ; he was now a great man, and had property under his controul, houses and churches, mea-

dows and corn-fields, islands and fisheries. He found to his cost that property involved care ; he was now in danger of becoming the mere man of business. He had to be on horseback, and to ride about from convent to convent, attended by his chaplains and a lay-brother. Nay, he found what was worse than all, that possessions involved law-suits ; he had to renew his acquaintance with the palaces of bishops, and come into the courts of chancellors and high justiciars. And when the king was in Normandy, to and fro, he had to sail across the seas, to have his cause decided. He had often to bear cold looks and sneers of contempt, nay, in defending the rights of his church, he was ill-treated by some powerful tyrant, and even beaten. He was now in a good school for humility, and he rejoiced in the humiliation which God had sent him to make him like his Lord. What these law-suits were about, the scanty notice of his biographer does not tell us, but there was another anxiety upon him which we can easily imagine for ourselves, and that was the care of so many churches, and so many souls. What he had begun in simple faith as a part of the government of his parish, had now grown into an order, and before he died, nine houses of nuns and canons together, and four of canons alone, had been founded, so that he had under his direction fifteen hundred nuns, and seven hundred canons. In the rule of this large body he had to preserve his soul from partiality to particular persons or places, lest it should withdraw his mind from the attention due to the whole. In order to keep his mind fixed upon God alone, he lived a life of greater austerity than seemed possible for his now aged body. He followed the usual exercises of the convent, and was therefore *always* in the refectory with the canons,

but his meals were so slender as to be a continued mortification. By his side he ever had a platter, which he called the Lord's dish, and into this he threw the greater part of what was set before him, that it might be given to the poor. At night, when compline was over, and the whole convent at rest, he remained in prayer, interceding for all his brethren and sisters, for prelates and kings, for the dead, and for the living. All night long he continued sitting on his bed, without laying his head on a pillow, and in this posture he slept, his head resting on his chest. God so rewarded his servant, that whatever he did, his soul was ever fixed on God in prayer ; to assist himself he made a sort of rosary of his fingers, reciting some prayer on each of the joints. He loved the sweet voice of the church in her chaunts, and tears ran down his cheeks when he was singing hymns and canticles in the choir.<sup>1</sup> But his tears were not always those of devotion and joy, he wept with those who wept, and especially bemoaned with tears over the impenitent, who would not weep for themselves. In the direction of so many souls he met with many forms of the tempter's wiles, and many sins ; and in the difficult management of such cases, he tempered severity with kindness. " We have seen him," says his disciple, " when any one had sinned even to deserve excommunication, and then repented, at first appear hard-hearted, and almost inexorable, in order to try the contrition of the penitent ; but, when he saw that the penitence was true and sincere, he shed tears in the presence of all, and called together his friends and brethren, and made all rejoice with him over the once lost sheep. Thus afflicting himself, and

<sup>1</sup> *Sauve sonantis vocibus ecclesiæ illectus. Vita St. Gilb. p. 16.*

suffering with the afflicted, he followed Jesus with his cross."<sup>1</sup> For some time he would not formally enter his own order ; he probably wished to be more able to give up his charge before he died, but at last he was persuaded to do so, lest the royal authority should take occasion to appoint his successor, and make of Sempringham a sort of commendatory priory. He therefore at Bullington priory received the habit at the hands of Roger, prior of Malton, one of his original canons, whom he made in every thing his chief adviser.

He continued in this mode of life till the year 1164, when it might seem that his life was now drawing to a close ; he had outlived all the saints of his day, St. Norbert and St. Malachi had long been at rest, and now St. Bernard was gone too, and Pope Eugenius. He had seen the last days of the Conqueror, and had lived through the days of the Red King, and of Henry, and in the troublous times of Stephen, he had dwelt at peace, and had peacefully founded his monasteries, and ruled his nuns ; and now a new king was on the throne, powerful as the Conqueror, passionate as his successor, and withal wily and clever as Henry Beauclerc. Gilbert had in his youth seen St. Anselm's struggle with the secular power, and now a more deadly battle was awaiting the church, in which he too was to take his share.<sup>2</sup> The battle had begun, and the church had gained her point in Stephen's time ; Henry Murdach had been made archbishop of York, in the king's teeth, and the liberty of election vindicated. Gervase, Stephen's son, had been degraded from the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> *John of Hexham*, in ann. 1154.


abbacy of Westminster, the revenues of which he had wasted ; and Theobald, after vindicating an archbishop's right to cross the channel in obedience to the mandate of the Holy See, had returned in triumph, having laid the royal domain under an interdict ; finally in 1151, a council, held in London, had asserted the privileges of the ecclesiastical courts against the pleas of the barons. But Henry Plantagenet was a very different man from Stephen, who was only a chivalrous asserter of a disputed crown ; he was a reformer, and the ecclesiastical courts must needs square with his reforms ; they must not come in the way of circuits and justices in eyre, and the king's lieges must not be excommunicated without his leave, though they have transgressed ecclesiastical law, and parish churches must be given away according to the decisions of the courts of my lord the king ; and to clench the whole, England must be separated from the head of the church, for no appeals to Rome must interfere with the king's justice.

Henry knew not what he had done, when he called Thomas his chancellor, and said to him, "It is my will that thou be archbishop of Canterbury." Nay, the noble-minded chancellor knew not the meaning of his own words, when he pointed to his gay dress and said with a smile, "Truly a religious man and a holy thou wouldst place in this holy seat, over so holy and famous a convent of monks ; know well, that if by God's will it should be so, thou wilt very soon turn thy soul away from me, and the good-will which there is now between us will be turned into the most savage hatred. I know well that thou wouldst make exactions, yea, that thou dost now dare much in church *matters*, which I could not bear." It was a good

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stroke of policy in Henry ; the Pope wished it, and the bishops, and the clergy wished it ; it would cement so firmly the good feeling between church and state. But Thomas knew Henry better ; and he knew too what an archbishop of Canterbury could do if he would. However Henry had his will, and to the joy of all but himself, Thomas was consecrated archbishop. But a very few years after, the scene was much changed ; the king's famous constitutions, his scheme of church reform, had been brought forward. Thomas opposed it, for he saw through the meaning of them. He was deserted by the bishops ; some could not, others would not see ; they saw that Henry's eyes looked fiery, and they gave up the church's liberty. Thomas yielded for a moment ; he received the constitutions, but asked for more time to consider them before he put his seal to them. The seal was never put ; the inferior ecclesiastics in general, the smaller abbeys, and sisterhoods of nuns, and the parish priests, as a body, all felt a strong and almost instinctive sympathy all through the contest, with the archbishop, and now his momentary weakness filled the hearts of those about him with dread. As they were going home from the council, his attendants whispered among each other sad words about the fortunes of the church, and one, the cross-bearer, who rode before him, murmured something about a victory won over the general, and now it was useless for others to fight. The archbishop heard his words and said, " Why sayest thou this, my son ;" when the cross-bearer spoke his mind openly, then that noble heart was well nigh broken, and he sighed deeply, for he saw his error. " No wonder," he thought ; " the church may well become a servant through my *means*. I came to rule her, not from the

school of Christ, not from the cloister, but from the king's court, a courtier proud and vain. I, the leader of buffoons, the master of hounds, the nurturer of hawks. I, to be the shepherd of so many souls." Then tears in abundance broke forth, and he sobbed aloud. However the battle was not yet lost, and so the king felt, as soon as it was known that the archbishop had repented. Henry's temper was none of the best, and much less would have been enough to try it. That his chancellor, the man of his creation, the warlike archdeacon, who loved the noise of battle so well, that he gratuitously plunged into it, the gay courtier in the ermine cloak, the acute diplomatist, learned in the law, that he should turn against him and set up for a saint ! It was too much, and he vowed vengeance. It was his own fault ; he did not know what a heart beat under that ermine cloak, what a hatred of impurity and an unsullied chastity were there, even in its most worldly times. There was stuff to make a martyr of in that noble heart, now that God's grace had touched it, and Thomas listened like a little child to his own cross-bearer, to John of Salisbury, or any friend who re-proved him. But whoever was to blame, it was now too late, and the archbishop must be got rid of. In 1164, articles of impeachment were framed against him, grounded on his conduct as chancellor ; this was coming near the question at issue, whether an ecclesiastic was amenable to a civil tribunal. The bishops deserted him ; one or two secretly assisted him, among whom, it must be said, was Henry of Winchester, who, from an instinctive liking for what was great, or because his visit to Cluny had improved him, took his part. As a body however, the bishops left him to the tender mercies of the king.



The proceedings of the court are obscure, but it appears that on the first days of the trial, heavy and ruinous fines were imposed on the archbishop ; the cowardice of the bishops apparently encouraged the king, and it was intimated to Thomas, that on the last day he should have to defend himself on a criminal charge of perjury and treason. From Thomas's indignant words to the bishops, it seems that he made a distinction between a civil and a criminal action, and refused to be amenable to the royal tribunal in the latter case. The former accusations respected his conduct when chancellor ; this one called him in question for what he had done as archbishop. Frightful rumours were afloat that the archbishop was to be murdered in the court. At this terrible time, when all shrunk from his side, one unknown monk, the representative of many a poor brother and sister who were praying for him, bade him the next day celebrate a mass in honour of the blessed first martyr, Stephen, and so he should escape his enemies. Thomas trembled, after having so lately lived a secular life, he thought himself unfit to wear the crown of martyrdom ; yet not for one moment did his heart shrink from what he had to do.<sup>1</sup> The next day, though it was no holy-day, in full pontificals, with the mitre on his head, and the pallium round his neck, he celebrated the mass in honour of St. Stephen. Some of the king's attendants who were in the church, wondered what it meant, but they wondered still more when, fresh from the sacrifice in which he had offered up himself with the immaculate Lamb, he took the

<sup>1</sup> Et adhuc conjicio ex his quæ dicitis vos non solum in civili sed in criminali causa, in foro sæculari, judicare me paratos. *Quadril. i. 29.*

cross from the hand of his attendant, and in the sacred vestments he made his way towards the king's court. All shrunk back before him. The bishops stood aghast ; it was a proclamation of open war ; it stripped the question of all legal form, and made it start up in all its naked awfulness ; the archbishop must die, or the constitutions be accepted. By God's grace neither happened. The king and the barons did not await him ; it was bringing the question to an issue a little too soon, and they retired to an inner room. It was a pale and trembling troop which they left behind, the bishops of England cowering around the majestic figure of the archbishop. Quietly he sat, with a young clerk, his attendant at his feet ; and when some of the officials from the king's chamber came down and glared fiercely on him, he only bent his head, and spoke words of comfort to the poor youth. At length judgment was pronounced that the archbishop was a traitor and a perjured man. Then in came Robert, earl of Leicester, with a troop of barons, and bade him come to the king, to answer the impeachment, or hear his sentence at once. Sentence ! said the archbishop, and with the cross still in his hand, he rose up and continued, "Nay, Lord earl, my son, hear thou first ;" and he refused this impeachment before a civil tribunal, and then appealed to the pope. His last words were, "And thus, by authority of the church and the apostolic see, I go hence." Then he quietly walked down the hall, and the nobles and courtiers followed him all the way with outcries and abuse, but none durst stop an archbishop so habited, and with such a weapon. The door was locked, the keys were hanging against the wall, and one of the archbishop's attendants took them down, and trying one after another, he found the right one,

and the archbishop passed forth from the hall from which he never thought to have come alive.

During this contest, and indeed throughout the whole of the momentous struggle, it was evident who were on the archbishop's side, and who were against him. All in authority shrunk from him ;<sup>1</sup> but while the bishops were afraid to support him, the clerks, who attended them, openly expressed their sympathy ; thus, when Roger, archbishop of York, was withdrawing from the court for fear of what was coming, he met two of his clerks and bade them follow him. But one of them, master Robert, said : " I will not go from hence till I have seen what God's will comes of these matters ; if my lord of Canterbury fight for God and for His justice even unto blood, he cannot end his life more nobly." And, as was afterwards proved, this held good with the monastic orders ; the heads of the Cistercian order in England shrunk from the storm when Henry threatened to drive every white monk out of his realm, if they continued to shelter the archbishop ; but the abbot of Circumpanum<sup>2</sup> was not afraid of Henry's anger, and entering into his very presence, delivered a message from the archbishop ; and many a poor English monk ventured his white habit among Henry's armed retainers for the same purpose, till the barons advised the king to extirpate the order, and Henry wrote a letter of complaint

<sup>1</sup> Reliqui vero fere omnes in inferioribus gradibus constituti personam vestram sinceræ charitatis brachiis amplexantur altis sed in silentio suspiriis implorantes ut Sponsus Ecclesia ad glorium sui nominis felici vota vestra secundet eventum.—St. Thomas Ep. i. 85. ap. Lup. op. Tom. x. p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. ii. 84. There may be some mistake in the name of this Abbey, which can no where be found, but the fact is certain.

to the abbot of Citeaux.<sup>1</sup> But it was not only the Cistercian authorities, but those of the Carthusians and of the order of Grandmont, that Henry duped.<sup>2</sup> There was, however, an order which steadily, and from the first, took part with the archbishop, and that was the Gilbertine. When, after the council of Northampton, Thomas determined to fly from England, and rose at night from his bed in the church of the Cluniac convent of St. Andrew, we find a poor brother of the order of Sempringham at his side, to guide him through the wild swamps of the country, to the city of Lincoln. From thence, he went down the river for the space of forty miles, and the little boat threaded its way among the watery wastes and fens of Lincolnshire, till they landed on a lonely spot, surrounded on all sides by water, a hermitage belonging to the order of Sempringham.<sup>3</sup> Here he remained in security for three days, for no one would have dreamed of meeting his lordship of Canterbury in that dreary place. But he was glad of this solitary island with its little chapel in the wilderness, for he here recruited his wasted strength before he crossed the sea. He lived on the coarse food of the monks, and when the brother who was attending on him saw him sitting alone at a table, eating vegetables, he burst into tears, and left the room to hide them.

<sup>1</sup> Ep. xxxiv. b. 2. v. also Ep. i. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. v. 12. where Mr. Froude, apparently by reading *adimplerent* for *adimpleret*, has given a turn to the sentence still more unfavourable to the monastic orders.

<sup>3</sup> This is probably "*pastura cum mansura, Johannis quondam heremitæ in marisco de Hoiland*," mentioned in the confirmation of the possessions of the order by Innocent III. noticed above. The place is still shown not far from Tattershall and Coningsby.

His next stage was again a dependency of Sempringham called Haverolot ;<sup>1</sup> after this he came out of the intricate wilderness of fens, the little out-of-the-way world of the Gilbertines, into the civilized path of the great world which lay beyond, and he durst not any longer travel by day. He lay hid at Estray, a manor belonging to St. Trinity of Canterbury, till All Souls' day, when a vessel was provided to take him over to France.


Here, in an obscure cove on the coast, was put ashore the archbishop of Canterbury ; still he was not out of danger, for when he was chancellor he had opposed the wicked marriage of the earl of Boulogne with an abbess, and the earl would certainly have given him up to Henry. So he put on the white habit of a Cistercian monk, and the rough monkish cloak upon his shoulders, and calling himself brother Christian, trudged on foot through the mire and the rain. He was indeed very little like himself in such a guise as this, but he could not hide himself, and two or three times he was all but discovered. Two men were seen hawking as the party passed along the road, and for a moment Thomas forgot his troubles to fix his eyes upon a beautiful hawk on the sportsman's wrist. Ha ! said one of the men, if I mistake not, we have here the archbishop of Canterbury. Fool, said his fellow, what need has the archbishop to walk in

<sup>1</sup> A place called St. Botolph's, is mentioned on the way between the hermitage and Haverolot ; it appears likely that this is the villa quæ dicitur Sanctus Botulfus, named in the confirmation ; perhaps Haverolot may be the house of the order said to be there. Camden mentions a place called Botolfstoune, near Boston, and the order had lands at Tilney, near the same place. Haverolot was therefore probably in the neighbourhood of Boston.

such gear as this ? He had not gone far before his strength failed him and he sunk down, declaring that he could go no further, and that they must carry him or get him a horse ; so they went and bought him a horse for a few shillings, with a straw bridle into the bargain. As he rode on, equipped in this sorry way, some armed men came up and asked him if he were the archbishop of Canterbury. What ! is it the wont of Canterbury to ride in such trappings as these ? was his answer, and the argument was conclusive, for they looked at the figure besmirched with mud on the sorry steed, and thought it could not be he, who when chancellor, rode at the head of twelve hundred knights. In this guise, about evening, he came into Gravelines, and went to a poor inn to rest for the night. But mine host looked at brother Christian and bethought himself he had seldom seen so majestic a Cistercian before, and when he looked again, he thought that that ample forehead, and long melancholy face, and those delicate hands, could only belong to the archbishop of Canterbury ; and so he told the peasant girl who waited on the guest. And the poor maiden brought him nuts, and cheese, and all she could, to do him honour ; the host too threw himself at his feet, and, notwithstanding his attempts to disguise the truth, he could not but acknowledge who he was. A few days after, he was riding in a very different accoutrement from that in which he entered Gravelines ; when once he got into the territories of the king of France, he was again received as became an archbishop, and rode into St. Bertin attended by a train of the gallant chivalry of France, and Louis received him with open arms.

Meanwhile, Pope Alexander and the cardinals were sadly perplexed ; they had already the emperor and an

antipope to deal with, and that was quite enough without quarrelling with Henry to boot. Besides which, English gold and promises had done its work even in the sacred college ; and prudent men began to think that these were not times to enforce antiquated pretensions ; the archbishop was a chivalrous and high-minded man, but chimerical schemes must not for all that trouble the peace of the kingdom. But all these, the usual excuses of cold hearted men, disappeared when at Soissons the archbishop met the Pope and with simple earnestness laid before him the constitutions of Clarendon. Alexander saw at once what was the question at issue, and none of the cardinals durst propose that these new royal customs should be introduced. But all became breathless with surprise when Thomas took the ring from his finger with which he had been married to his church, and put it into the hands of his Holiness. No wonder, he said, things had gone wrong with him ; he had been placed on the throne of Canterbury, not by the will of God, but by the will of the king ; and now the church of Christ was suffering for his sins. He would not resign to the king, for that would have been a betrayal of the cause of the church, but, “ into thy hands, father, I resign the archbishopric of Canterbury.” At these words of a noble-minded man, daily advancing in self-knowledge and humility, many shed tears ; but then in came the prudent men, and they thought the opportunity was a good one ; it was the very thing which was wanted to make things smooth ; it would restore the proper harmony between church and state. But this was a doctrine too ungenerous and cowardly for the Holy See to adopt ; and Alexander restored the ring to Thomas, and refused to accept his resignation. And then he said, Up to this time thou hast abounded in



the good things of this life, but now, in order that thou mayest learn how to be the comforter of the poor, thou must take religious poverty for thy mother, and learn of her. I commend thee, therefore, to the poor ones of Christ ; I mean to this man, he said, pointing to the abbot of Pontigny, who was present. And so Thomas went to the holy abbey of Pontigny, in the broad and rich vale, through which flow the clear waters of the Serain on its way to join the Yonne ; and here, with the good Cistercian monks, he remained in peace. He now, perhaps, for the first time in his life, could sit in solitude and silence and look upon himself ; he would read and meditate on the mighty mysteries of theology, and study the Holy Scriptures, which he used to look upon with an awful wonder when he read them with master Herbert of Lombardy, and used to sigh that he had no more leisure. He had leisure enough now ; and in a course of long and bitter years, he was training up to be a martyr.

Scarcely had Thomas reached Pontigny, when a persecution commenced against his friends in England. Gilbert has his cross too, and we will come to him in time ; but who are all these that crowd around the gates of Pontigny ? Cold, hunger, and nakedness, are evidently playing sad havoc among them. Alas ! they are the friends of Thomas, all who have lifted up a voice or a finger for him, whom now Henry in his rage has expelled from their homes and made them swear to go across the sea to Pontigny, to show the Archbishop what sufferings are endured because he is obstinate. Henry sought out all the kinsfolk of Thomas, all whom he loved best, and all in any way connected with him, and bound them by this terrible oath to *present themselves* at the Abbey-gates. Delicate females

with infants in their arms fainted by the way in Flanders, and could not come, for it was midwinter ; but Thomas heard of them all from those who could reach him, and they were all names which he had known familiarly. This was the greatest cross of all ; it was in its measure like the pain of our blessed Lord when he from the cross saw His mother suffering with Him. All this might be spared if Thomas would but say a little word, if he would but quit a high-souled dream, and be like other bishops. Then all these could go back to their pleasant homes, to dear England, and be happy again. But Thomas did not shrink for a moment ; this would be coming down from the cross where he was hanging with his Lord, and giving up the bride of Christ, not to the beloved disciple, but to the Roman governor. He wrote to the kings and nobles on the continent who favoured his cause, and the poor exiles were distributed among them. But there were still troubles in England which the Archbishop could not heal ; and Gilbert had his full share in these. He seems to have understood the Archbishop, and the interests which were at stake, better than any one of those who were not his immediate friends. Who indeed understood him thoroughly ? Not certainly that bold cross bearer who amused his indulgent master by asking him how his robe behind came to be so puffed out, and knew not that under his pontifical vestments he wore a shirt of hair ; and who was disposed to smile again when he found that the cowl of the monkish habit which the Pope had sent the Archbishop, was all too short. Nor did the Abbot of Pontigny understand him, when the Archbishop talked of having dreamed that he should be martyred, and the good Abbot with conventual prejudice smiled,

and asked, What has a man who eats and drinks to do with martyrdom? None of them, though they came closest to him, knew what was in him. But Gilbert understood well what he was fighting for, and showed that he was prepared to suffer for the cause. The share which Gilbert's order had had in the escape of the Archbishop out of the kingdom, exposed its head to suspicion. At this time the king was in great dread of the sentence of an interdict proceeding from the Archbishop upon the whole kingdom, and the most savage orders had been issued against any clerk or other person who should bring the sentence into the kingdom. Loss of eyes and burning were a portion of the provisions of this sanguinary enactment. This might be a specimen for Gilbert of what the king was capable of in his wrath. When therefore with all the priors of his order he was summoned to Westminster to clear himself of this suspicion, he knew not what might happen to him. When he arrived in London, he found that he was accused of having sent supplies of money to the Archbishop. This was high treason; but the judges (it was most probably in the court of the earl of Leicester, high justiciar of England) were disposed to be lenient, and to respect his grey hairs and his character for sanctity. They only required of him to take an oath that he had not sent supplies to the Archbishop. This seemed a very simple mode of terminating the affair; but Gilbert bethought himself, that though it was quite true that he had not sent any money, all the world would suppose, if he took the oath, that he thought it wrong to assist the noble exile in his struggle for the rights of the Church. He therefore quietly refused to take the oath. The judges threatened exile; his priors thought it chimerical to

refuse the safety which was offered to him by Providence ; they thought it wrong, and a violation of their vow, to expose themselves to be forced away from their cloisters for a doubtful point of honour. But Gilbert had made up his mind ; he knew how much was at stake, and he thought it worth the risk ; he rejoiced and thanked God that in his old age, after a life of peace, God should now give him grace to bear the reproach of Christ, and to be a confessor for His church. It is a temptation peculiar to monks, to convert their cloister too much into a home, and to set their hearts upon it ; and so it was with the Gilbertine priors, and with other monastic authorities in those days too ; they had given up one home for Christ's sake, and never expected to have to give up another, with which all their religious associations were connected. The great world beyond their cloister was nothing to them, and why should they give up the scene of their duties, to which they were bound by a solemn vow, for any of its turmoils ? And it might have been thought that Gilbert's many years of cloistral life would have made him identify Sempringham with the Church ; but he was now ready to risk the breaking up of his order, and to join the Archbishop in his exile. The judges were sorely puzzled ; they knew not what was to be done with a man who would not take the mercy which they offered him. They were however unwilling to condemn him, so they sent over to Normandy, to know what was the king's pleasure, for Henry was then on the continent.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Gilbert and his priors were detained in London, to the sore annoyance of the latter ;

<sup>1</sup> This makes it probable that these events happened in 1164, when Henry was in Normandy.

they might any day be sent at once into exile, as had happened to so many, in a state of destitution into a foreign land. Gilbert had enough to do to keep them in order ; many of them were ready at once to take the oath, and to go back to their convents. He took care to keep up the services just as if they were at Sempringham, and their sweet chaunts were heard by the populace outside : it was a novel thing to hear in London the voices of a set of canons fresh from the fens of Lincolnshire. While all about him were in trembling expectation of the king's sentence, he was unusually gay. It was the instinctive joy of a heart feeling sure that God was for it, because the world was against it. In the very court of Westminster, while all his canons were sitting with long faces about him, he bought some trinkets of a boy who was hawking them about, simply to try to amuse his downcast companions. At length, when all were expecting the very worst, when Gilbert himself had made up his mind to die in France, far away from Sempringham, an order came from Henry, reserving the cause for his special judgment, and ordering the Gilbertines meanwhile to be dismissed. Whether Henry thought that there would be something absurd in thus, in the eyes of all England, banishing a few religious who lived in a swamp, as disaffected and dangerous persons ; or whether, to give him his due, he really admired the unbending character of Gilbert, whom it is expressly said that he revered ; or whether both together be true, at all events so it was, the prior of Sempringham beat king Henry and his justiciars to boot. Then, and not till then, he, without any oath, simply informed the judges that he had not sent any supplies to the Archbishop. This *was not an official act at all, and therefore was quite*

different from what had been required of him, and he went back to Sempringham, thanking God that he had escaped the snares which had been prepared for him.

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## CHAPTER IX.

*The Rebellion.*

GILBERT's trials are not over yet ; one still awaits him, and that perhaps the worst of all. Some men die young, and do a great work before they die ; others die in middle age, when their powers are first brought into play, and their work beginning to thrive ; others again are spared to become old men, and find their bitterest cross at the last. And so it was with Gilbert ; he had all his life long enjoyed the love and esteem of all about him, and the greatest saints of the age had been his friends ; but now he had to endure the suspicions and the coldness of the good, the shame of evil report, and the ingratitude of those whom he had nurtured. It has been said before that the most imperfect part of the order was the management of the lay-brethren ; and at this time, two instances of most flagrant disorders occurred among them. One of them is an isolated fact, which would be inexplicable if it were not connected with the licentious spirit which appeared about this time among this portion of the order. It does not appear certain whether Gilbert ever knew it at all, for it only occurs in a letter of St. Aelred to one of his private friends ; and from the desperate and wicked efforts made to hush it up, and from the fact that the prior applied to St. Aelred, and not to him, it seems probable *that it never reached his ears.* Its sickening

details might therefore perhaps have been spared the reader, and yet they are instructive from the deep feeling of humiliation which they leave, or ought to leave, upon the mind. A monastery had been founded, as has been said before, in Yorkshire, in a place so dreary and lonely, and so surrounded with water, that it was called Watton, or the Wet-town. To this house a little girl of four years old had been sent by Henry, Archbishop of York, to be brought up by the nuns. The poor child had always been unruly, and the nuns had never been able to do any thing with her ; and when she grew up, though she wore the veil, she never had the heart of a nun.<sup>1</sup> One day, the lay-brethren<sup>2</sup> came into the monastery to do some work ; the unhappy maiden lingered near, and watched them intently ; at length her eyes met those of one of them. It is useless to go through the steps which led her to crime ; suffice it that she fell. By and bye her shame could no longer be concealed, and her partner in wickedness fled away. The nuns perceived what had taken place, and now comes the most miserable part of a miserable tale. Instead of taking the fall of one of the inmates of the

<sup>1</sup> The expression is “*suscipitur nutrienda*.” It does not appear from St. Aelred’s narrative that she was offered by the Archbishop as a nun, and thus, according to St. Benedict’s rule, obliged irrevocably to take the veil. Her wearing the habit does not prove it. Not long before this time, Matilda, who had lived from her infancy in the monastery of Wilton, and had been obliged by her aunt to wear the black veil and habit, had been allowed by St. Anselm to marry Henry I. Nor again can it be made out from St. Aelred’s expressions that she had made her profession at all. He certainly does not say that she had.

<sup>2</sup> *Frater* in the Gilbertine rule always means *lay-brother*, and not *monk*.

house as matter of humiliation, some of the nuns grew frantic with rage ; they had been proud of their chastity, as giving them honour in the sight of men, and now they began to imagine that the finger of scorn would be pointed at them. Instead of rejoicing that by the dispensation of God without their fault, they were despised by men as sinners, as had happened to our blessed Lord, they murmured against God. A party of them cruelly beat and loaded with chains the wretched girl ; their rule obliged them to confine her, but they might have comforted her in her prison, and tried to win her back to Christ. Their next act was to get by stratagem the partner of her guilt into their power, and to execute upon him a sanguinary and horrible vengeance. Instead of trusting that their own purity would be asserted by him who saved St. Agnes from the place of shame, they devised a scheme of fraud in order to conceal the event altogether. It is needless to go into the details of their wickedness ; it is enough that they imposed on St. Aelred, and persuaded him that the girl had repented, and had been miraculously delivered, and that the chains had dropped from her hands. It is remarkable that they did not send for Gilbert to be witness to the miracle, instead of St. Aelred ; they probably thought that they could not impose upon him. But however this be, so runs the tale, and a miserable tale it is, which may make any one tremble who is disposed to pride himself upon his austerities or his purity, forgetting that without charity they are nothing worth. These nuns of Watton were firm and zealous rather for their own honour than for the Lord, and were betrayed into a terrible system of deceit, which now rises up in judgment against them with posterity.

As far as the history of the order is concerned, this

falls in with the account given of the rebellion of the lay-brethren in Gilbert's old age. It was a hard matter to keep in order so many strong and hardy peasants. It required the entire Cistercian system to do so, where every monk was in his way a farmer, and it could not be effected by a few canons, who were literary men. Accordingly it was found that Hodge, the smith, and Gerard, the weaver, had organized a conspiracy among the lay-brethren, to procure a mitigation of the rule. They began to think that after all, a little more eating and drinking, and a little less austerity and psalm-singing, would make life more easy and pleasant. It was soon discovered that they were not the chief promoters of the disobedience of the brethren. Hodge and Gerard were among the lowest of the number ; the former had been taken from the road side, by Gilbert, when a beggar-boy, with his father and brothers, and had been taught the trade of a smith. Their defection would therefore not have been dangerous, but mention is made of two others, to whom Gilbert had entrusted the chief care of the lay-brethren, and these appear to have secretly taken advantage of the vagabond propensities of the smith and the weaver to obtain a mitigation of the rule. Several of the brethren, headed by these two worthies, the weaver and the smith, refused to work, and went about spreading calumnies against the canons of the order. Gilbert, in order to stop the growing disaffection, excommunicated the chief offenders, and required of the rest an oath that they should in future keep to what they had vowed in their profession.<sup>1</sup> There must

<sup>1</sup> This is gathered from St. Thomas of Canterbury's letter, Ep. ii. 69, and also from the letter of the Bishop of Norwich, *quoted in Dugdale*, after the Gilbertine rule. The whole ac-

have been some clever men among these lay-brethren ; it was an unusual thing to make the profession over again, unless there was reason to suppose that the first profession was invalid. An abbot could not exact it, and Gilbert seems to have overstept his powers<sup>1</sup> in requiring what was equivalent to a second profession. The lay-brethren knew this, and while some of them left the monastery and went all over England maligning the canons, these two, Hodge and Gerard, were sent to Rome to demand justice in the name of the rest. Strange that two runaway brethren, a smith and a weaver, should have the power of obtaining an audience from the supreme pontiff ! but it suits well the Head of the Church to hear the complaint of the poor as well as the great. Not only did they apply for redress, but they obtained an order in their favour, and returned in triumph to Sempringham. Technically they may have been right, but Gilbert, in a few words, quoted from him by his biographer calls it "a cruel mandate," and so it was ; all authority was of course at once broken up in the order, and now the lay-brethren were prepared to go all lengths in their attempts to obtain their demands. Gilbert, distressed as he was at the verdict given by his holiness, obeyed it in every point. It was a trying time ; mortified pride, a just indignation at ingratitude, his sense of what was best for the order, which he had raised, and all that complicated feeling, so well expressed by "being hurt," would have prompted him to treat the offenders

count is very confused, and all that can be done is to put it together in the best way of which it is capable.

<sup>1</sup> *Quod nulla, sicut audivimus, religionis institutio exigere consuevit.*—*St. Thomas ubi sup.*

harshly. But he obeyed the Pope, and took them back into the order.

The brethren now in a body demanded a mitigation of the rule ; but here they found him inflexible. He did not consider whether the rule was too strict or not ; it appears afterwards that he did think it too severe ; but that was not the question then, the brethren asked for it in a wrong way, and they must submit before any thing could be done. His old enemies, Hodge and Gerard, elated by their victory at Rome, now broke all bounds ; they pilfered the community, and with the spoils bought two fine horses, on which they rode about the country, going where they would, and publishing every where the most atrocious falsehoods against the canons. At the same time the rest of the lay-brethren prosecuted their cause with vigour ; Gilbert, in his old age, had to drag his worn-out body from tribunal to tribunal to hear the cause judged. Here he had the right side of the question ; he was their prior, and he alone could release them from the professions which they had made to him ; the Pope indeed who had confirmed the order, might revoke his confirmation, but, till then, no bishop could make him alter the rule ; he could only make him observe it. Many bishops tried to persuade him to mitigate the rule, but he was inflexible ; they must first submit to him. But it was a dreadful trial for Gilbert to have the consciousness that vague reports were afloat in the world against the reputation of his canons. The order was of such a nature that the world was sure to receive with willing ears whatever was said against it. The bitterest cross however to Gilbert must have been the displeasure of the exiled archbishop of Canterbury, of him whom he so loved, for

whom he had risked so much. St. Thomas could only hear vague reports across the sea ; again the former verdict obtained at Rome, was a fact against the Prior, and the subsequent conduct of the lay-brethren looked as if they had never been received back at all into the community, since the Pope's mandate. He therefore wrote to Gilbert a letter of grave rebuke. His affection for him is evident throughout ; "God knoweth," he says, "that we love thee with sincere charity in Christ ;" and he calls the order "the fruits of our labour," as though he identified himself with Gilbert. But he commands him strictly to do his best to call back the brethren who are scattered abroad, and accuses him of disobeying the apostolic see ; and he advises him to mitigate the rule, lest after his days his work should perish.

Poor Gilbert ! good and bad were against him. He could not ride abroad without feeling that the finger of scorn might be pointed at him and his train, in consequence of the calumnies of the false brethren. But, unlike the nuns of Watton, he took it all patiently, because it had come upon him in the way of God's providence. He humbled himself and acknowledged that he deserved it all, and thanked God for the affliction, for it taught him to love none on earth too well. He was now on the verge of the grave ; all his life long he had been honoured, and it would now do him good to be despised. At the same time he felt sure that God would clear up the innocence of his canons ; and so it was ; Hodge and Gerard, in the course of their wanderings on the backs of their high-mettled palfreys, fell into grievous immoralities, and their flagrant licentiousness turned all men against them. There was immediately a re-action

in favour of the canons, as there always is sooner or later in favour of those who have been unjustly treated. There is a retributive justice in public opinion, which, on the long run, rights itself, and repairs its own mischief. Men opened their eyes to the holiness of the order, and soon after, Gilbert had the satisfaction of seeing the unruly brethren submit themselves unconditionally, all except friend Hodge, who persisted in his vices to the end. The brethren only humbly begged of Gilbert to mitigate the rule as he thought fit. Then, and not till then, after he had given the kiss of peace to the penitent, he promised that "in tempering whatever was too rigorous, and in correcting the statutes, he should in all things be guided by the authority of his lordship the pope, and the counsel of religious men." Gilbert was now rewarded for his patience ; it often happens that men step forward at the end of a contest, who, if they had only shown themselves at the beginning, might have saved a great deal of trouble, and it may be, that God so wills it for the perfecting of His saints. So it happened in this case ; many of the English bishops, especially those who lived near the seats of the order, now wrote to the Pope in favour of Gilbert. One of these letters, that of the bishop of Norwich, has been preserved, and is so striking a testimony in favour of the order, that it will be well to quote it at length.

"To the most holy father and sovereign pontiff Alexander, William, bishop of Norwich, the servant of his Holiness, sendeth greeting, and obedience . . . Gilbert, of Sempringham, both from his near neighbourhood to me, as well as from the renown of his sanctity, for which he is so eminent, cannot be unknown to me. His soul is the dwelling of wisdom, and he draws from

the fountains of the Holy Spirit those waters which he knows so well how to pour into the ears of others. In winning and retaining souls for God, he is so zealous and successful, that when I compare myself with him, I am ashamed of my own slothfulness, and it seems as if the prophet Esaias were chiding such as I am, when he says, 'Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea.' Among his nuns, of whom he hath gathered for God a multitude greater than I can number, there burn such a fervid zeal for religion, and careful love of chastity, and so faithfully do they keep apart from seeing or conversing with men, that they realize that scripture which saith, 'My beloved is for me, and I for him, who feedeth among the lilies.' Of his canons, whose innocence I hear has been calumniated to your clemency, I call God and mine own soul to witness, I never remember to have heard a single word of ill fame, and I could not but have heard it from their near neighbourhood to me, and from the multitude of persons who come to me on business. All access to the nuns is so entirely forbidden, that not even the prior has general license to see or speak to any of them, and in the reception of the Holy Eucharist, neither priest nor recipient know one another. Each portion of the community has its own house, its own cloister and church, its own houses for sleeping, meditation and prayer. From his lay-brethren he only requires that they keep inviolate that mode of life, which they have professed, and this in my presence they have promised with much devotion to do. He does not presume to change what has been confirmed by your authority and that of my predecessors, and what they, after long trial, have promised and vowed to observe ; lest if he changed it, he might be open to the charge of laxity and presumption.

All I wish, is, that this law-suit, which certain lukewarm men, of cold charity have entered against him, should be referred to the judgment and witness of men who have a zeal for God according to knowledge, that they may discover the truth by inspecting the privileges granted by the apostolic see, and by the clear examination of facts, men who have known and experienced what it is to observe a rule without tiring of the religious life, or looking back after putting their hands to the plough. A man worn out by age and more full of virtues than of days, ought not to be treated so, that through discouragement he should swerve from his purpose to the detriment of many souls, but be rather encouraged and treated with gentleness, that he may persevere to keep alive the salvation which God has worked by him in our land. Daily does the wheat grow thin in the garner of the Lord, and the chaff is multiplied. May God preserve your holiness in safety for His church. Farewell."

Besides these bishops, Gilbert found a more extraordinary advocate, and that was Henry II. At one period of the contest with the archbishop, it was his policy to conciliate the monastic orders ; their names were useful to him in his desperate struggle.<sup>1</sup> Another reason why he liked the Gilbertine order was, that it was purely English. Henry, like all our kings, loved not the spiritual jurisdiction of any foreign prelate, abbot or potentate. For this reason he disliked the Cistercians ; in the latter part of this contest, it suited his purpose to cajole them, but when the archbishop was sheltered at Pontigny, he wrote to authorities abroad and threatened to turn every Cistercian out of England. The

<sup>1</sup> Ep. iii. 29. iv. 38.

Gilbertines, therefore, were an order that did not interfere with his purposes. Besides this, however, it appears that he had a real reverence and regard for Gilbert. Henry Plantagenet had his good moments, and under good guidance he might have been other than he was. He at one time patronized the Carthusians, and procured the appointment of St. Hugh to the diocese of Lincoln. In the same way he could not help admiring the unworldliness of Gilbert. He therefore wrote to the pope and threatened to resume whatever he himself or his nobles had given to the order, if the institute was changed by the machinations of the rustics, as he called them, who were the bondmen of the soil. Henry was imperious even when he did good ; however Alexander could not resist so many testimonies in favour of the Gilbertines, and sent a mandate to Gilbert forbidding any one to attempt to alter the institute without his consent, and empowering him and his successors, the priors of Sempringham, to correct and amend the statutes with the help of the other priors of the order. Alexander added also various privileges to the order, and confirmed all that his predecessors had granted.

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## CHAPTER X.

### *The death of Gilbert.*

THE gaps left in his narrative by Gilbert's biographer, have made the various chapters of his life more like detached scenes than a continuous history ; or rather it would be more true to say, that his life was ordinarily one of peace and harmony, passed in the calmness of

the convent, so that for many years he was hidden with God, and history has nothing to do with him. Sometimes he is called forth for some special purpose and he plays his part before the world and all men gaze upon him, and then he goes back to his cloister and is no longer heard of. It is all like a sweet and low chaunt which cannot be heard outside the walls of the church, except when sometimes it swells into bolder and more majestic music. We are now however come to the last scene of all. Gilbert, as we have seen, outlived one generation of saints ; but before he died, another with whom he had been connected had now passed away. St. Thomas of Canterbury had won his crown nineteen years before Gilbert's death ; and he was at least eighty years old when the saint was martyred. After all his troubles, he spent these last days in peace ; when the ear heard him, then it blessed him, when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him. He was revered all over England ; and we have seen, says his biographer, bishops on their knees begging for his blessing, yea, and bishops from foreign lands, which the echoes of his fame had reached, coming to beg for a portion of his garments to carry back with them to their own lands as relics. But the strangest homage which he received was, when king Henry would not allow him to come to his court on the business of the order, but went himself to his lodgings with his peers, and humbly begged for his benediction. The scourge of the monks of Canterbury must have done its work when Henry bowed so low. Eleanor too, his unhappy queen, loved to bring to him her princely boys, that they might kneel down and be blessed by him. Henry seems to have had an almost superstitious reverence for him ; when his sons revolted against him, and his queen was imprisoned by

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him for her crimes, when poor Henry's heart was broken and the sins of his life all came upon him, then a messenger came to tell him that Gilbert was dead. The king groaned deeply, and said, "Well do I know that he has passed away from the earth, for that is the reason that all these misfortunes have found me out." A man who had lived through the whole of the twelfth century from its very beginning, could not but be an object of reverence. It was a wonderful sight to see this old man with his body bent with age, his bones scarce cleaving to his flesh, and his whole frame pallid and wasted, yet still capable of managing the affairs of his order, and going about with his eye undimmed, and his mind as vigorous as ever. At length, however, his sight failed him and he became quite blind before he died. Then he sent for Roger, prior of Malton, and put the whole management of the order into his hands. Still, however, the spirit rose above the body ; he could not ride, but he was borne in a litter from place to place. His brethren were very anxious that he should take his meals in his bed-room, for the refectory was a long way off, and there were some steps to be mounted at the entrance. He, however, never would consent to this arrangement, and said : Gilbert will never set an example to his successors of eating good things in his room. So every day he was carried by some of the brethren into the refectory. Even in this extreme old age, when his limbs hardly held together, he kept his old practice of watching at night, and would rise when all were asleep and kneel by the side of his bed ; and when once he was discovered in this posture by his brethren, he half chid them as though they had not made his bed comfortably the evening before, to account for his being *found in this strange posture*. When his

external sense had failed him, the eye of his soul was the more fixed upon God, and tears often ran down his cheeks, as he thought upon his Saviour and His infinite mercies. He would often speak on spiritual things with the brethren, but his words were few and short, and he soon relapsed into silence, which was often broken by strong prayers and ejaculations which burst from him, "How long, Lord, wilt thou forget me for ever?" "Woe is me, for the time of my sojourning is prolonged!" And if he ever thought that he had spoken more than he ought, he would at once kneel down and repeat the confession of the church, humbly begging to be absolved. In this way he lived on, hardly holding to earth either by body or soul, till he was more than a hundred years old; at length, early in the year 1189, he felt his end to be approaching, and he sent letters to all his priories to beg that prayers should be offered for him, leaving his blessing behind him, and absolving all from their sins against the rule, at the same time solemnly warning all those who should quarrel with their brethren and break the peace of the order, that this absolution would profit them nothing. He was then at Cadney, one of the lonely island-monasteries of the order, and so near his end was he thought to be, that he received extreme unction, and the last rites of the church. But he rallied, and the dying saint still crossed the waters which surrounded the island, and his chaplains bore their precious burden to Sempringham, through lonely places, lest they should be forcibly detained by any one who might wish Gilbert's bones to lie in his church. All the priors of the order had time to assemble and come to him. Here he was lying as was thought in a sort of stupor on his bed, and *no one was with him*, but the canon who eventually suc-


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ceeded him as prior. He was conscious of no one's presence, when he was heard murmuring low to himself the Antiphone in the service for a confessor, "He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor." Then, he continued in the same low tone, as though he were expounding it in the church, "Yes, he hath dispersed to many persons ; he gave, he did not sell ; it was to the poor too, not to the rich." And then he subjoined as if to the canon who was with him, "It is thy place to do so now." He continued in this half unconscious state through the night, till, as the morning dawned, and the convent was singing the lauds for Saturday, and the reader's voice repeated, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," the eternal morning dawned on the blessed saint, and his soul passed into the hands of its Creator.

This was on Saturday, the fourth of February, 1189. Twelve years after, on the Eve of Holy Cross-day, 1202, a vast concourse assembled at Sempringham, to witness the translation of his relics to a more honourable place in the church of the priory. He had wrought no miracles in his lifetime, but when he was dead God was pleased, through his intercession, to heal many who came to kneel at his tomb. In the beginning of the year, Innocent III. had canonized him, after a judicial enquiry into his merits and the miracles wrought by his body ; and now the archbishop of Canterbury, with other bishops, and many an abbot, came to translate his relics. Then the body of St. Gilbert was raised on the shoulders of England's chief nobles, and in solemn procession was borne to the place which it was to occupy. Truly, God doth bring down the mighty from their seat, and exalt the humble and meek.


Now that we have gone through St. Gilbert's life,

for so we may now call him, it seems hard to us to realize that such a person ever existed. We who live in the world, whose eye glances from one object of affection to another, and is taken by all, whose ears are tickled with praise and pained by blame, who set up for intellect and talent, if we have it, and fancy that we have it, if we have it not, whose highest austerity consists in temperance, and highest charity in good humour, we can hardly do more than gaze on a character like Gilbert's, and wonder if after all it be true. Those of us who rise above this standard, in as far as they rise above it, may enter into the notion of a saint. But to us, common-place christians, it is only a beautiful dream of something which is past long ago, and which is nothing to us. And this sort of feeling is a dangerous one and likely to increase, when lives of saints take the place of romances and fairy tales. To deny or not to realize the existence of Christian Saints, is apt to make a wide gap in christian faith. They who consider the saints in a dreamy way, will hardly be able to do more than dream that there has been upon earth One, who was and is Man-God, for the lives of saints are shadows of His, and help to interpret His actions who is incomprehensible. They who look upon the saints as mere personages in religious romance, will be apt to look on christianity as a beautiful philosophy. St. Gilbert was a real being of flesh and blood, the parish priest of Sempringham ; his institute is a fact in the history of the English church ; it was raised up by God as an opponent of the lust, which was the especial wickedness of the day. It saved a great many souls which might otherwise have perished ; it raised many others to an extraordinary degree of sanctity. It is, therefore, a fact which stares us in the face and of which we must make



the best we can ; a vast number of persons, amounting to fifteen hundred, did give up all the joys of home, and refuse to give place in their hearts to the strong affections, which entwine round the hearts of those who are married, in order to live in poverty a hard and austere life. In this case too all allowances are made ; the defects of the order are exposed ; the temptations peculiar to monastic life are seen clearly ; some of the nuns of Watton, it is true, did become savage old maids instead of virgins of Christ ; the order did not spread much after the death of the founder, and, unlike the great monastic institutions of the continent, never out of the country which gave it birth ; finally, it appears in after times to have degenerated. Yet, with all these drawbacks, it is true that St. Gilbert did a great work, and one at which kings and queens stopped to look, for it forced itself upon their notice. Even the impure Eleanor loved to think of the institute of holy virgins, and the tyrant Henry bowed before its founder. And all this was affected by a man, not so unlike externally to one of ourselves. He went to Paris as we might go to Oxford or Cambridge, and he came back and took a family living, and was ordained upon it. His character too, as we have said before, was not one of what is called romance. He was distinguished by a quiet waiting upon the will of God, and a most energetic and unbending execution of it, when he had once ascertained it. He remained in the Bishop of Lincoln's palace much longer than he wished, because, though utterly uncongenial to his tastes and habits, he would not break away from where God had placed him. At length the archdeaconry was offered him ; this was too much, and he went away. All the vast good which he effected, was the result of natural circumstances. The institution of his order was for

the sake of seven maidens, whom Providence put into his way, and to whom God gave grace to desire perfection under his guidance, in his parish. His application to St. Bernard, and the appointment of canons, arose naturally out of the increase of the monasteries. Enthusiasm such as his, is seldom found connected with such quiet waiting upon God. And this part of his character all may imitate. Not every man is called upon to found a monastic order and govern it ; nor to take the part of a holy archbishop like St. Thomas, under peril of a king's anger ; but all must quietly wait upon God in times of darkness, and keep their souls free from inordinate affection, and be ready to follow the gentle leading of God's will, wherever it may lead them, even to the most painful sacrifice. Very few of us can be monks and nuns ; but all are called upon to live above the world, and by daily self-sacrifice to train themselves to give up, at a moment's notice, whatever is most dear. And they especially, who have apparently least duties, unmarried persons should wait calmly on the Providence of God, willing to accept that lot in life which He has prepared for them, wishing for nothing, and hoping for nothing but what He wills. Meanwhile, they have more time than others for frequent prayer and for long and steady contemplation of our blessed Lord, in the great mysteries of the faith. Then, as the wonders of heaven, by God's grace, grow upon them, they will see the excellence of the good part of Mary, to sit at the Lord's feet and to hear the words which He speaks to the soul. And in proportion as they realize the Incarnation of the Lord, they will love more and more to contemplate the saints, and especially St. Mary, for a reverence for her is inseparable from that *right faith* in the Humanity of the Son of God, which

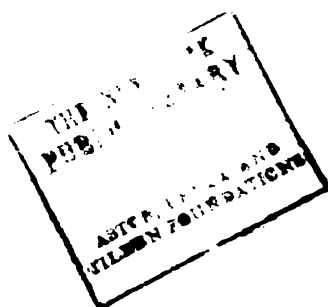


we must all believe and confess. They will learn that the high honour, in which the church has ever held holy virginity, is a necessary portion of christian doctrine, and not a rhapsody peculiar to any age. It is a feeling which has seized on minds of every stamp, from the most matter-of-fact to the most imaginative, if only illuminated by God's grace. St. Gilbert's character could not come under either of these classes ; besides the all-enduring energy of the homely Saxon, he had a dash of the adventurous Norman ; and the Holy Spirit had blended both these discordant elements into one, as He would in his mercy again blend the spiritual character of the English nation, if it were not a stiff-necked people.

FINIS.







LIVES

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OF

THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

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St. Wilfrid, Bishop of York.

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## THE LIFE OF

# St. Wilfrid,

BISHOP OF YORK. A. D. 709.

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To be striving to do good and to follow conscience, to be secretly sure that, with many miserable failures, we are doing God's work, and yet the while to be misunderstood, cruelly misinterpreted by persons whom we not only acknowledge to be good but indeed far better than ourselves—this is a cross which Saints have sometimes had to bear. It was St. Wilfrid's cross, and very heavily it pressed upon him. When St. Bernard persecuted St. William of York, the archbishop doubtless suffered greatly; yet he was no Saint then, and he could not have had that high clear consciousness that he was suffering for the cause of Christ and His Church, which St. Wilfrid might have. But it may be that St. William often pondered the story of his great predecessor, in many respects not unlike his own. This then forms part of the interest of St. Wilfrid's life to a reader, while it gives no little pain and perplexity to the writer. Here is a Saint misunderstood by Saints, persecuted by Saints, deposed by Saints as unworthy of the pontificate: truly a very fertile theme for the shallow criticisms of the children of the world: while to a Christian its lesson is that earth is not our home, that the balance of things is not righted till the Judgment, the oppressive mystery of the world not unriddled, the

Church Militant not the Church Triumphant : a simple thing to say, yet involving more than most people put into the consideration.

Then another thing which makes St. Wilfrid's life interesting is its being, so to speak (for the language is hardly too strong), a new beginning for the Saxon Church, a new mission from Rome. Not only were the northern shires *almost* in overt schism about the Scottish usages, not only had rough-handed kings begun to tyrannize over the Church and even interfere in episcopal elections, but we are told that, after the death of St. Deusdedit, Wine the bishop of the West Saxons was the only canonically consecrated bishop in England, and he too afterwards guilty of fearful simony, and Wilfrid felt himself compelled to go to the Gallican bishops for consecration ; and the course of the narrative will bring before us some lamentable instances of erastian submission, and even of disgraceful misrule in ecclesiastical synods. But Rome carried the day in the person of St. Wilfrid. They wore him out with strife, calumny, and persecution ; but his patience was indomitable, his energy unsleeping, and he finished his work, though he died in finishing it. Such was St. Wilfrid's office ; let us see how he fulfilled it.

Of Wilfrid's parents nothing more is known than that they were noble. None of his three biographers mention his father's name or the place of his birth. The date seems to have been somewhere about 634, if that is not putting it too late. His birth was marked by a singular prodigy, which attracted people's attention to him, and made them divine what manner of child he was to be. At the moment of his birth a heavenly light enveloped the house, so that, to those without, it appeared as though it were in flames. His mother

died while he was yet a child, and Fredegod relates that the fury of a step-mother rendered his home anything but peaceful ; and in his thirteenth year, the boyish noble, already shewing his ardent and fearless spirit, demanded of his father horses and armour and a retinue, and in this guise, as if he were playing at chivalry, young Wilfrid received the paternal blessing, turned his back upon his home, and proceeded in gay martial trappings to the court of King Oswy. He met with a kind or rather good-natured reception, and was soon wisely provided for by Queen Eanfleda. It chanced that there was then at court an old noble named Cudda, whom a long palsy had weaned from the vanities of the world, and who was anxious to become a monk at Lindisfarne. To his care the queen commended young Wilfrid. Anything that was a change seems to have suited the boy equally well. Perhaps he was tired of his armour and retinue. However, he asked his father's leave to go to Lindisfarne, to which his father willingly consented, deeming such a wish in one so young to be probably an inspiration of Heaven. He resided some years among the monks, diligently pursuing his studies, and which is of far more importance, daily growing in chastity and other graces. His powers of mind were very great indeed ; the psalter was quickly learned, and he made himself master of such other books as fell in his way. But he was so far from conceit or forwardness or thirst for praise that his obedience edified the whole community, and his humility was so lovely as to gain for him the affections of old and young. But, as St. Bede says, he was a clear-sighted youth, and that means a great deal in the mouth of the venerable historian.

In truth, *amid the monks of Lindisfarne, in the very stronghold of Scottish usages, Wilfrid made a discovery,*

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and that discovery gave the colour to his whole life. Whether he had fallen upon some old books, or from whatever cause, he began to suspect that there was a more perfect way of serving God ; that there were ancient traditions of Catholic customs which it was most dangerous to slight, and yet which were utterly neglected. When once he had got this into his mind, he seized upon it and followed it out in that prescient way in which men who have a work to do are gifted to detect and pursue their master idea, without wasting themselves on collateral objects. Wilfrid pondered and pondered this discovery in his solitude, and he saw that the one thing to do was to go to Rome, and learn under the shadow of St. Peter's chair the more perfect way. To look Romeward is a Catholic instinct, seemingly implanted in us for the safety of the faith. Wilfrid does not appear to have made any secret of his difficulties, neither do the good monks seem to have been quite satisfied themselves that all was right. He acquainted them with his purpose of going to Rome to see what rites were followed by the churches and monasteries close to the Apostolic See. They not only approved his design, but exhorted him at once to put it into execution.

Wilfrid, leaving Lindisfarne, went to take counsel of his patroness Queen Eanfleda, St. Edwin's daughter, whose baptism was such an interesting event in the history of the Northumbrian Church. The queen highly commended Wilfrid's intentions, and despatched him to Kent to King Erconbert, who was her relation, desiring him to send the youth to Rome. The Church of Canterbury was at that time governed by St. Honorius, a man who is described as being peculiarly well skilled in ecclesiastical matters. Here then was another field for the keen-eyed Wilfrid. But it was short

of Rome. The process may be longer or shorter, but Catholics get to Rome at last, in spite of wind and tide. What he saw in Kent would only make him thirst more to approach as an ardent pilgrim the veritable metropolis of the Church, to pray at the tombs of the Apostles, and reverence the throne in the Lateran Cathedral, and honour the relics in the basilica of Holy Cross. Everybody who came across Wilfrid seems to have been struck with him, and not only so, but to have loved him also. King Erconbert probably had not as yet forwarded many pilgrims from the northern shires to Rome ; it was a road untrodden by the English youth, says Eddi Stephani,—untrodden as yet ; so that Wilfrid was singular in looking on such a pilgrimage as meritorious, and hoping to win pardon for the sins and ignorances of his youth in such a holy vicinity as the threshold of the Apostles. However this fresh, quick youth from the north seems to have astonished the Kentish king not a little. Prayer, fast, vigil and reading, made up the life of his young guest, so that Erconbert “loved him marvellously.” Indeed Wilfrid must have had a versatile mind, and certainly hesitated at nothing which enabled him to realize to himself communion with Rome. This strong feeling seems to be the key to almost everything he did. At Lindisfarne he had learned the psalter : but it was St. Jerome’s improved version, generally used by the Gallican and German Churches of that day. At Canterbury he found the old version in use, as it stood before St. Jerome took the matter in hand. In fact it was used at Rome in preference to St. Jerome’s version ; this was enough for Wilfrid. He made all the haste he could to forget *St. Jerome’s version*, and learn the old one. What a *task it must have been !* Learning the psalter by hear

is plain work, even if it take some time and no little diligence ; but to go on saying the hours for years, wearing the very inflexions of St. Jerome's version into his heart, and then to lay it aside, and learn a new version, and steer clear of his old remembrances during recitation,—this must have been an irksome task, and one which many would never have compassed at all. But it was a labor of love : it brought Wilfrid more into contact with Roman things. This was the Roman feeling in a little matter ; but it was the same feeling, and no other, which was the life of his actions afterwards.

Erconbert detained the reluctant pilgrim for four long years in the Kentish court, and Wilfrid began to languish with the sickness of hope deferred. Meanwhile there arrived another young noble on his way to Rome. This was no other than Benedict Biscop. The king could now hardly defer his consent to Wilfrid's departure, and is said to have told St. Benedict to take him to Rome. From this it would appear that St. Benedict was the elder of the two : now we know he was only five and twenty when he made his first journey to Rome, so that Wilfrid must have been very young indeed when he left Lindisfarne, as he had resided four years with Erconbert. Wilfrid and St. Benedict travelled together as far as Lyons ; and here begins another characteristic of St. Wilfrid's life. He and St. Benedict disagreed, and parted at Lyons. That there was nothing eccentric in Wilfrid's temper, no untoward projections in his character, one may infer from the love with which he seems to have inspired people generally. Yet there must have been something about him not easily come at, not readily understood or sympathized with, which must account for much that happened to him. That there was a quarrel seems

clear from the somewhat ambiguous language of Eddi Stephani. "Affable to all, penetrating in mind, strong in body, *a quick walker*,<sup>1</sup> expert at all good works, *he never had a sour face*; but with alacrity and joy he travelled on to the city of Lyons; there he abode some time with his companions, his austere-minded leader departing from him, as Barnabas did from Paul because of John who was surnamed Mark." What this exactly means, whether there was any John Mark, *i. e.* any bone of contention, in the case, or whether, as is usual with the writers of those ages, whose style is tessellated all over with scripture vocabulary and allusions, the quarrel between two good men simply brought St. Paul and St. Barnabas to mind in the way of an analogy,—we confess we do not know. It is plain, however, that Wilfrid and Benedict separated at Lyons in some unpleasant way: and it may be that the objects of the two were not alike. St. Benedict seems to have wished to visit Rome, and did not want to linger by the way; while one of Wilfrid's professed objects was to visit and examine the chief monasteries on the road and study their discipline, an object which, later in life, became paramount with St. Benedict himself.

If the date of St. Benedict's first visit to Rome be correctly fixed to the year 653, then 634 obviously cannot be the date of Wilfrid's birth; for he was fourteen when he went to Lindisfarne, and he stayed four years in Kent: this would only leave him a year at Lindisfarne, whereas Bede distinctly says that he served God *some years* in that holy house. The chronology of St. Wilfrid's life is altogether very difficult to fix; and it is not at all pretended that the dates given here are really the true ones; an attempt has been made to ascer-

<sup>1</sup> Allegorically, *he was a quick walker his whole life through.*

tain the truth, but without any such special research as would have been beside the practical end for which the life was written.

St. Delphinus was archbishop of Lyons at the time when Wilfrid visited that city, and he would of course be provided with commendatory letters from St. Honorius to all the prelates whose dioceses lay in his road to Rome. The young pilgrim seems to have made the same favorable impression on the archbishop that he had done on so many others, and it is particularly mentioned that his bright face recommended him especially to Delphinus as betokening an inward purity and calmness. In a short time he became so much attached to Wilfrid that he proposed to adopt him, promised to give him his niece in marriage, and to obtain for him an important government in Gaul. "If you consent to this," said the archbishop, "you will find me ready to help you in all things just as a father." But much as the archbishop loved Wilfrid, he had not fathomed him; Saint and martyr though he was, he did not see the tokens of Wilfrid's real character, his love of God, his burning zeal for the Church, his invincible singleness of purpose; else would he never have tempted him with the world. He imagined his guest to be a young Saxon noble, full of chivalry and devotion, high purposes and virginal purity. But Wilfrid comprehended that he was called to higher things than honorable wedlock and dignified magistracy, room though there was in these things to serve God and His Church. He refused the archbishop's kind offers. "I have vows," said he, "which I must pay to the Lord; I have left, like Abraham, my kindred and my father's house to visit the *Apostolic See*, and learn the rules of ecclesiastical discipline that my country may make proof of them in God's

service ; and I would fain receive from God what He has promised to them that love him, an hundredfold now, and then eternal life, for leaving father and mother, houses and lands. If it please God, I will see your face again on my return." The archbishop was of course too holy a man not to delight still more in Wilfrid, seeing in him such manifest proofs of a heavenly vocation. He detained him on the whole about a year at Lyons, and doubtless gave him much valuable instruction in the customs of the Church. Lyons and the banks of the Rhone are not without Christian antiquities and associations of a sort to make a deep impression on Wilfrid ; and it would not escape him that Easter was celebrated after the Roman computation in the city of St. Irenæus, notwithstanding the vain plea of the Scots that they stood upon the tradition of St. John. At the beginning of the following year St. Delphinus allowed his guest to depart for Rome. The good archbishop had promised to be a father to Wilfrid, if he would accept his offers of worldly happiness and rank ; would not the holy martyr feel still more a father's yearning heart to that heroic youth who with such gentle consistency put the bright things of the world aside, and went on his way hopefully and bravely ?

As at Canterbury and Lyons, so at Rome Wilfrid distinguished himself by his genius for making friends. The archdeacon Boniface, who was secretary to St. Martin the pope,<sup>2</sup> attached himself particularly to the young Englishman, and took as much delight in teaching him as if he had been his own son. Truly Rome was always a kind-hearted city ; the very hearth and home of catholic hospitality ; even in these days, if considerate kindness could do so at Rome, the very aliens

<sup>2</sup> *Mabillon* asks—"An Eugenii ejus successoris ?"

tain the truth, but without any such special research as would have been beside the practical end for which the life was written.

St. Delphinus was archbishop of Lyons at the time when Wilfrid visited that city, and he would of course be provided with commendatory letters from St. Honorius to all the prelates whose dioceses lay in his road to Rome. The young pilgrim seems to have made the same favorable impression on the archbishop that he had done on so many others, and it is particularly mentioned that his bright face recommended him especially to Delphinus as betokening an inward purity and calmness. In a short time he became so much attached to Wilfrid that he proposed to adopt him, promised to give him his niece in marriage, and to obtain for him an important government in Gaul. "If you consent to this," said the archbishop, "you will find me ready to help you in all things just as a father." But much as the archbishop loved Wilfrid, he had not fathomed him; Saint and martyr though he was, he did not see the tokens of Wilfrid's real character, his love of God, his burning zeal for the Church, his invincible singleness of purpose; else would he never have tempted him with the world. He imagined his guest to be a young Saxon noble, full of chivalry and devotion, high purposes and virginal purity. But Wilfrid comprehended that he was called to higher things than honorable wedlock and dignified magistracy, room though there was in these things to serve God and His Church. He refused the archbishop's kind offers. "I have vows," said he, "which I must pay to the Lord; I have left, like Abraham, my kindred and my father's house to visit the *Apostolic See*, and learn the rules of ecclesiastical discipline that my country may make proof of them in God's

service ; and I would fain receive from God what He has promised to them that love him, an hundredfold now, and then eternal life, for leaving father and mother, houses and lands. If it please God, I will see your face again on my return." The archbishop was of course too holy a man not to delight still more in Wilfrid, seeing in him such manifest proofs of a heavenly vocation. He detained him on the whole about a year at Lyons, and doubtless gave him much valuable instruction in the customs of the Church. Lyons and the banks of the Rhone are not without Christian antiquities and associations of a sort to make a deep impression on Wilfrid ; and it would not escape him that Easter was celebrated after the Roman computation in the city of St. Irenæus, notwithstanding the vain plea of the Scots that they stood upon the tradition of St. John. At the beginning of the following year St. Delphinus allowed his guest to depart for Rome. The good archbishop had promised to be a father to Wilfrid, if he would accept his offers of worldly happiness and rank ; would not the holy martyr feel still more a father's yearning heart to that heroic youth who with such gentle consistency put the bright things of the world aside, and went on his way hopefully and bravely ?

As at Canterbury and Lyons, so at Rome Wilfrid distinguished himself by his genius for making friends. The archdeacon Boniface, who was secretary to St. Martin the pope,<sup>2</sup> attached himself particularly to the young Englishman, and took as much delight in teaching him as if he had been his own son. Truly Rome was always a kind-hearted city ; the very hearth and home of catholic hospitality ; even in these days, if considerate *kindness* could do so *at Rome*, the very aliens

<sup>2</sup> *Mabillon asks*—"An Eugenii ejus successoris?"

are made to forget that they are aliens, and dream for that little while that they are sons. Is this craftiness? Yes; goodness was ever crafty, ever had a wily way of alluring what came near it. How happy Wilfrid must have been at Rome! We are told that he spent entire months in going from one holy place to another, not to see only, but to pray and perfect himself in the exercises of a spiritual life. His lot in Rome was the same which befalls most travellers who go there for religious ends and spend their time in a religious way. Will it be thought superstitious to say that to such persons it almost invariably happens that there is something or other of a mysterious kind in the occurrences which befall them there, something new, strange, unaccountable, provided only they are searching after heavenly things? As if that city were instinct with a sort of preternatural energy, and that virtue went from it, either to heal or hurt, according to the faith of him who touched, we read that Rome made Petrarch almost an infidel; and Luther, to say the best, had his infidelity corroborated by his visit to the catholic capital, because of the sins, the pride, luxury, and corruption there.

Mysterious Rome! thy very ills are fraught  
 With somewhat of thy fearful destiny,  
 So that the vision of thy sins hath wrought  
 Even like a curse within the passer-by.  
 Here gazed of old with no religious eye  
 Petrarch the worldling, here the Apostate Monk  
 Came ere his fall; and when they saw how nigh  
 Good lay to evil, their base spirits shrunk  
 As from a touch-stone which could bring to light  
 Unworthy natures that must walk by sight  
 Through lack of trust:—and thus are sceptics made  
 By that half-faith which seeks for good unbound  
 From ill; and hearts are daily wanting found,  
 Upon the balance of that problem weighed.

This is the dark side of the picture. But, to say nothing of other shrines where relics repose and spots where holy influences abide, who shall reach even by conjecture to the number and extent of visions seen, prayers answered, vows suggested, lives changed, great ends dreamed, endeavored after, accomplished, inspirations, or something very like them, given to the listening heart—who shall imagine the number and extent of these things vouchsafed at one place only, the low bannisters with their coronal of starry lights round the Confession of St. Peter and St. Paul, where rich and poor kneel and say Augustine's prayer, or breathe their own secret wants and wishes? It cannot be too strong a thing to say that no one ever went to Rome without leaving it a better or a worse man than he was, with a higher or a harder heart. However this may be, it is certain that something strange occurred to Wilfrid at Rome, something just of the same sort that we hear of so frequently in these days, or which some of us may have actually experienced.

He approached Rome, his biographer tells us, in the same spirit in which St. Paul approached Jerusalem, full of a diffident anxiety lest he should have run in vain. He sought it as the legitimate fountain of catholic teaching, desiring to measure and compare his English faith with it, and prepared to abandon whatever was opposed to the doctrine, spirit, or usage of Rome. He went to a church dedicated to St. Andrew, or rather an oratory, such as was not a parish church but served by occasional priests. It appears to have been one of the earliest places he visited. There on the top of the altar was a copy of the four blessed Gospels; *before this Wilfrid knelt down humbly, and prayed to God through the merits of His holy mar-*

tyr St. Andrew that He would grant him the power of reading the book aright, and of preaching "the eloquence of the evangelists" to the people. From certain circumstances, more or less singular, Wilfrid was led to connect the unexpected friendship and instruction of the archdeacon Boniface with this prayer; and he seems to have told his biographer Eddi, the precentor of Canterbury, that he gained that friend through God and the Apostle. Boniface not only instructed him in the interpretation of the Gospels, but taught him the paschal computation, and dictated to him the rules of ecclesiastical discipline. When Wilfrid's visit drew near a close, Boniface presented him to the pope, laying open to his Holiness the cause of his journey and how strangely and perseveringly he had accomplished it; whereupon St. Martin, laying his hand on the young Englishman's head, dismissed him with blessing and prayer: and so Wilfrid turned his back on Rome, or rather carried Rome away with him in his heart.

Wilfrid had now a long road to traverse; yet he had a home nearer than England, even the palace of the archbishop of Lyons. Whether the young traveller left Rome by the Porta del Popolo and went straight to the Ponte Molle, or whether he left it by the Porta degli Angeli, the gate of the Saxon Borgo, and so skirted the Tyber under Monte Mario, he would have abundant matter for meditation as he wended to Viterbo over the tawny pastures of the Campagna. This was his first visit to Rome; he was going to embrace the ecclesiastical state in England; how unlikely that he should ever visit Rome again! He had nothing to carry away with *him* but reminiscences of profit and pleasure. He little *thought* how often the Eternal City must be approached *by him*, how he must sit in councils, plead his cause

before synods and congregations, carry to the feet of popes a load of weary wrongs and vexing calumnies and iniquitous oppressions, how the hands of kings and archbishops should be heavy on him, and that in fear of life, he should escape beyond seas, avoid the daggers of assassins and the conspiracies of monarchs, and seek refuge at that very tomb of St. Peter and St. Paul where the ardors of his youthful imagination had drunk and been satisfied in joyous pilgrimage. Rome had been the dream of his boyhood ; he had sought it, found it, and thought he had done with it. But it was not so : the word, the thought, the thing—they were to be by his sick-bed at Meaux, they were to be by his death-bed at Oundle. Ah ! so it is with all of us ; we have dreams, and they are other than we expected, and they haunt us through life, and go with us to the grave, like Wilfrid's Rome.

At Lyons, Wilfrid received a most affectionate welcome from the archbishop, who made him give a detailed narrative of all that had befallen him at Rome, and all that he saw, and all that he learned, and bade him shew him the relics wherewith Wilfrid was returning enriched to his own country. He remained with St. Delphinus three years (some say six), and from him received the clerical tonsure, St. Peter's Tonsure, as it was called : for even in this matter St. Wilfrid was still obstinately bent on Romanizing. The Scottish tonsure, called by the witty malice of the Romans the Tonsure of Simon Magus, was "a semicircle shaved from ear to ear above the forehead, not reaching to the hinder part, which was covered with hair." It does not appear that any symbolical meaning was attached to this tonsure ; it was one of the Scottish usages to which they clung *almost as fondly* as to their Easter reckoning. *They do not seem to have had any oriental tradition for*

this custom, for the Eastern tonsure, sometimes called the Tonsure of St. Paul, consisted in shaving the whole head, and this was used in some Western monasteries.<sup>3</sup> But the Tonsure of St. Peter went all round the head, and was a professed symbol of the Crown of Thorns, a solemn emblem setting forth the consecration of the person so marked and separated from the children of the world. This was the tonsure which Wilfrid now received at the hands of St. Delphinus. The longer Wilfrid stayed at Lyons the more necessary he seemed to the archbishop, who again proposed adopting him and making him his heir, dropping all mention of the marriage.

It would seem by the style of the good precentor of Canterbury, that Wilfrid had become so devoted to foreign usages that he might possibly have been tempted to remain at Lyons. But, as he says, God wished something better to our nation than that Wilfrid should stay there. It is not our business to enter into the causes of the cruel martyrdom of St. Delphinus. A persecution<sup>4</sup> was raised against the Church, or at least the bishops who held with St. Leger of Autun, by Ebroin, the mayor of the palace, and nine bishops were put to death, and Wilfrid's host among them. There was one strife, only one, between Delphinus and his English guest ; he forbade Wilfrid to follow him to his martyrdom, and Wilfrid would not obey. "What is better," said he, "than for father and son to die together? to be with Christ together?" So he went with

<sup>3</sup> Alban Butler.

<sup>4</sup> See Michelet Hist. de France, i. 273, and Butler's Life of St. Leodegarius. Some writers have carelessly attributed this persecution to St. Bathildis, the foundress of Corbie and Chelles, an Englishwoman.

him to the scene of his passion. First the Archbishop with holy intrepidity suffered martyrdom ; then Wilfrid was stripped, and was standing ready, the martyr's crown hard by him : but another martyrdom than that was reserved for him ; weariness, disquiet, thwarted purposes, harsh misunderstandings, strife, exile, poverty, disgrace—these were to be the jewels of his crown. While he stood ready, some of the captains cried out, "Who is that beautiful youth, who is now preparing himself for death?" It was answered that he was from beyond seas, an Englishman. "Spare him then," was the reply. Eddi Stephani scarcely knows whether to rejoice at Wilfrid's escape,<sup>5</sup> or to sorrow for his missing of the crown ; but at any rate, as he observes, he was like St. John at the Latin gate, when plunged in the boiling oil ; he was a confessor ready, nay eager, for martyrdom, and that he was not actually a martyr was of God's Providence, not of his own backwardness.

By some means or other Wilfrid got possession of his master's body, and satisfied his affectionate reverence by procuring for it an honourable and Christian interment. The place of his martyrdom was Chalons-sur-Saone. After the burial of St. Delphinus, Wilfrid appears to have returned home without any further delay : let us cast an eye over the scene of his future labors. Oswy was at this time the King of the Northumbrians. His two sons Egfrid and Alfrid seem to have been admitted by him as partners in the sovereignty, and are by Bede and others called kings, even while their father lived. It is said by some that Wilfrid had been acquainted with Alfrid before he left England, and had

<sup>5</sup> Peck in his *History of Stamford* makes Wilfrid only twenty-four or twenty-five years old at the time of this event. St. Delphinus is commonly honoured in France under the name of St. Chaumont.

inspired him with the same sentiments of devotedness to Rome which so distinguished himself. If this be true he can hardly have been connected with Alfrid as his tutor, as some say; but while at Lindisfarne he may have been selected for his high birth and intelligence as an occasional companion of the prince. One thing however is beyond a doubt, that Alfrid was noted for his preference of Roman usages, while Oswy was almost a bigot to the observances of the Scots. It was from Coenwalch, king of the West Saxons, that Alfrid heard of Wilfrid's landing in England, and how perfectly he had learned at Rome the veritable catholic practices in all things. He at once sent for Wilfrid, and looking on him as a pilgrim recently come from the Eternal City and as it were the representative of Rome, he flung himself at his feet and asked a blessing from him. Alfrid seems to have been never weary of conversing with Wilfrid about the discipline of the Roman Church, and doubtless what St. Wilfrid had to say, specially of the wonderful rule of St. Benedict, spurred the ardent prince to the munificence which he soon displayed in the matter of monastic foundations.

It so happened at this time that Lincolnshire, the territory of the South Mercians, was under the power of the Northumbrian king. The South Mercians did not form an integral part of his kingdom, as the Mercians north of the Trent did: but Oswy was lord paramount beyond the Trent, governing by lieutenants. After he had defeated the cruel Penda he governed his kingdom three years by Northumbrian governors; after which he appointed Peada king<sup>6</sup> of the South Mercians, incorporating with Northumbria the seven thousand

<sup>6</sup> *Peada was made king in 658: the Saxon Chronicle says in 655; this is certainly inaccurate.*

families of Mercians which dwelt on the north bank of the Trent. Peada had sought in marriage Alcfleda the daughter of Oswy. She had been denied him on account of his being an unbeliever ; but by the conversation of his friend Alfrid he became at length a convert to the faith, and was baptized by bishop Finan at Wallsend near Newcastle, and returned home, taking with him four missionary priests whose preaching Penda did not forbid, though his own heart was never surrendered to the Gospel. One of these priests, Diuma, was consecrated bishop. The Northumbrian and Mercian royal families were united by another marriage, for Alfrid married Kyneburga, one of Penda's daughters, by which he became brother-in-law to Peada. Notwithstanding these marriages, war broke out,<sup>7</sup> Penda was defeated, and Peada after three years raised to be one of Oswy's vassal-kings ; for we are told that Oswy did in fact rule the whole Heptarchy, being, according to Speed, the tenth "monarch of all the Englishmen." This statement of a very perplexed history seemed necessary in order to account for Alfrid's influence in Lincolnshire.

Anxious then to see the result of Wilfrid's travels brought to bear in a real way, Alfrid, either with Peada's consent or by Oswy's authority, gave him the land of ten families on the river Welland at Stamford in Lincolnshire,<sup>8</sup> wherewith to found a monastery, which was a cell in honor of St. Leonard, the hermit of

<sup>7</sup> The story that Alfrid rebelled against his father, and fought on the side of Penda, though received by Father Cressy, seems quite unfounded.

<sup>8</sup> Peck's arguments in favor of the Lincolnshire Stamford seem unanswerable ; the neighbourhood of Caistor, the foundation of Peterborough, and Wilfrid's having a house at Oundle, may be added as completing the evidence.

Limoges. It was under the abbey of Durham, though so far off ; Wilfrid's connection with Lindisfarne may account for that. In after ages a rent was paid from its revenues to the abbot of Croyland in return for giving up to Durham the abbey of Coldingham, which, equally distant the other way, belonged to Croyland. It is interesting to add, that, in the very year in which Oswy raised Peada to the rank of a vassal-king, he and Peada met and determined jointly to found a monastery in honor of Christ and St. Peter. This was done ; the foundation was made not many miles from Stamford, on the edge of the fens near Croyland, at a place called Medehamstead : this was the beginning of Peterborough Abbey. Wilfrid's abbey of St. Leonard at Stamford was rebuilt in a sumptuous manner at the joint expense of William the Conqueror and William Kairliph bishop of Durham.<sup>9</sup>

Wilfrid was now beginning to realize his dreams ; for into his new monastery he introduced the rule of St. Benedict. It is not our business to enter into the question of St. Augustine's introduction of that rule into England ; the monastic houses of the northern shires were from the first Scottish, and were established chiefly under the episcopate of St. Aidan. The rule therefore which prevailed in them was either the ancient Irish rule or that reform of it called the Rule of St. Columban : and it seems an undoubted fact that in the *north* of England at least the Rule of St. Benedict was introduced by St. Wilfrid. It was part, and a chief part, of his whole system ; in fact, the great means to the one end towards which he steadily bent his whole energies, the reduction of the Northumbrian Church to

<sup>9</sup> *It was not before the reign of William that it was dedicated under St. Leonard's name.*

catholic unity. This is a very interesting subject, but there is nothing more perplexing in monastic antiquities, and we cannot pretend to the various erudition requisite for handling it properly. Yet it is so intimately connected with the life of St. Wilfrid, being a principal feature of that old state of things, to the extinction of which he devoted himself, that we may be allowed to say a little about it.

The Rule of St. Benedict has been to previous monastic institutions almost like a deluge. It has well-nigh obliterated all vestiges of them, so that a clear view of them (so far as the West is concerned) is now impossible. Some have accused the partizans of Roman usages of fraudulently destroying most of the works of St. Columban; some of them, however, were found in the fifteenth century at Besançon and Bobbio, and were carried to the libraries of Rome and Milan. Of his rule enough is known to enable us to institute a very striking contrast between it and that of St. Benedict. The Benedictines maintain that it was the same to all intents and purposes, and it is a hardy thing to contradict Mabillon<sup>1</sup> on a matter of monastic history; but when the nuns ask St. Donatus, bishop of Besançon and disciple of Columban, to get them three rules that they may compare them, namely, the Rules of Cæsarius of Arles, Benedict, and Columban, it is plain some difference existed between them. The Bollandists again say that in their similarity and diversity the two rules may be compared to those of the Franciscans and Dominicans: this comparison certainly lays hold of the distinctive characteristics of both, yet is hardly fair to the modern orders. Putting aside then all considera-

<sup>1</sup> Yet Mabillon himself distinguishes between the Rule and the *Institute*.

tion of the spiritual and mystic wisdom in both rules, (for Saints composed them, and we must look on such things very far off,) we may institute an historical contrast between the two, which will help us better to appreciate what St. Wilfrid's work was and how he did it. The Irish Rule, confining ourselves to the children of its reform, produced St. Gall, St. Magnus, St. Theodore, St. Attalus, St. Romaric, St. Omer, St. Bertin, St. Amand, St. Wandrille, and others : let this be enough to shew how wonderful it was as a discipline for Saints : ours is a lower view of the matter.

No one can look into the Rule of St. Benedict without seeing that it is a code by which a mighty empire could almost be governed : it is full of magnificent principles and almost miraculous foresight : its characteristics are consistency of purpose, a large-hearted view of the capabilities of human nature, and a sort of grandeur which seems to descend into its very details and fill them with practical life. This is what may be said of the Benedictine Rule simply considered as a fact in the history of civilization. But what is still more striking is its want of stiffness and of rigid formalism,—in short its pliability : this it is which enabled it to do what it has done for the Church, and like a Gothic cathedral, to receive numerous modifications and additions and even some retrenchments, and yet to remain obviously, indisputably, cognizably the same Benedictine Rule. This is, so to speak, the *idiosyncrasy* of the rule. It gives it a trustfulness which makes it a thing men can work with for ever. This is just the one thing wanting in the Rule of St. Columban ; it has no pliability, no trustfulness ; it did not dare to commit *itself* to the responsible agency of superiors, to make *itself* over in faith to the keeping of holy obedience. It

was a *written thing*, and could advance no further ; it remained a written thing, and grew to nothing else. This might be very curiously illustrated by the penances prescribed. Nothing seems left to the discretion of the abbot, not the most trivial matters. For the monk who forgets to say *Amen* after grace, or sign the cross on his spoon or lantern, who spills his beer, who hits the table with his knife, who coughs while intoning the psalms, and sundry other things, the number of lashes even, as well as days of penance, are fixed, and are unalterable. The abbot has no discretion ; there is no weighing of circumstance or comparing of occasions allowed to him. It is a minute, burdensome, obstinate, cumbrous code, that is, treating it as an historical document. These characteristics run through it, full as it is of many touching disclosures of deep spiritual wisdom,—such as the law which enjoins a penance on any monk relating a sin of which he has already repented, and in repentance sacramental confession is included, as by so doing he risks the dangerous awakening of past temptations.<sup>2</sup>

Now such a rule, with such sacred wisdom and yet with such practical deficiencies, is precisely what might

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Dunham in his *History of the Middle Ages* has been more just to the Saints than most modern writers in England. But it is a random way of writing history to throw out without particular references such statements as the following : that the Scottish monks were not stationary like the Benedictines, but vagabonds—that their abbots were only in priests' orders, yet consecrated bishops and were considered as the superiors of bishops—that the Anglo-Saxons would never have recognised holiness unless joined with high birth—that the history of the Universal Church affords, so far as he knows, no instance of a deacon being allowed to preach (St. Ephrem is a famous instance) and many other such assertions. In spite of his erudition, *this inaccurate rashness makes him an unsafe guide.*

have been divined before as likely to come from the Irish or Scottish Church. Where a centre of unity was not acknowledged, there could be no trustfulness; it would not be safe to be trustful, but it would be wise to be suspicious. That Church is described by a French historian as animated by an "indomitable spirit of individuality and opposition." With much that was high and holy, there was a fierceness, an opinionated temper, an almost unconscious attitude of irritable defence—in theological language, a dislike of Rome, which is quite fatal to the formation of a catholic temper either in a community or in an individual. Without fancifulness, all this may be traced more or less in the lineaments of St. Columban's Rule; it is a portrait of the Church which gave it birth. Let us simply enumerate a few of the peculiarities of the Irish Church; there was the paschal cycle, the tonsure, the baptizing of rich people's children<sup>3</sup> in milk, the frequent marriage of bishops, even married monks with their wives and children claiming a share of what was offered at the altar; these were the things which grouped themselves round the denial of the Roman centre of unity. The monastic rule of this Church was the stronghold of its system, for it happened at that time that its spirituality, which is its strength, was mainly among the monks. St. Benedict's Rule was the weapon which Wilfrid took to fight down the Rule of St. Columban.

The characteristics of St. Columban's Rule, as representing the *temper* of the Celtic Church and civilization, are the more striking, inasmuch as the genius and disposition of its author were singularly opposed to the hardness and inflexibility of his rule. He was a poet,

<sup>3</sup> Carpentier Suppl. Gloss. Ducange, t. i. p. 30, ap. Michelet. i. 263, n. 4.

and his works are described as being remarkable for "imagination, energetic painting, and burning zeal," which we should not have at all expected from the author of such a rule: its uncompromising application of principles is only what we should look for from what we know of the history of that stern rebuker of wickedness in high places. Otherwise the difference between the temper of the rule and the genius of its author shews very strongly the justice of the view which would regard the rule as the natural growth and representation of the Celtic spirit. It may be true that Yepes, in his *Coronica General de la Orden de San Benito*, is guilty of an anachronism of twenty years in ascribing the cause of St. Columban's departure from Britain to the preaching of St. Augustine and his companions, as *Roman* missionaries, yet the mistake shews how vividly the Benedictine historian realized the antagonism between the two rules. As persons now-a-days really do not know what asceticism is, and might with an easy ignorance conclude from what has been said that St. Columban was an excessive formalist, we will in justice to the blessed Saint quote one passage of his writings from the historian cited above.<sup>4</sup> "Let us not suppose," says St. Columban, in the second of his instructions, "that to fatigue the dirt of our bodies with fastings and vigils will avail us, without a reformation of manners. To macerate the flesh, without corresponding benefit to the soul, is like cultivating ground which can never yield fruit: it is like constructing a statue, without all gold, within all mud. Why carry the war outside the gates, if the enclosure is a prey to ruin? What should we say of a man who *cleansed his vine all around*, yet inwardly suffered it to

<sup>4</sup> Vol. ii. p. 187.

be consumed by vermin and weeds? A religion of bodily gestures and motions is vain; vain is bodily suffering, vain the care which we take of our outward man, if we do not also superintend and cleanse the inward. True piety consists in humility, not of body, but of heart. Of what avail are the combats which the servant wages with the passions, when these passions live in peace with the master? Nor is it sufficient to hear and read of virtue. Will mere words cleanse a man's house from filth? Can a daily task be accomplished without labor and sweat of the brow? Wherefore gird on your armour: he who does not valiantly fight, can never obtain the crown."

Of course nothing which has been said can be construed into disparagement of the blessed Saints who came forth out of that ecclesiastical system, neither is it meant to assert that the Scots were in overt schism. Indeed there is very good negative evidence<sup>5</sup> to shew that St. Columban did himself receive at length the Roman computation for Easter. But the matter, if deeply examined, does put on a most serious aspect, much more serious than many church historians seem to be aware of. It is not too much to say that through the influence of the Scottish Church and of the Celtic civilization, of which Ireland was the centre, Christendom approached to the very verge of a tremendous schism, almost reaching in extent to the unhappy sacrilege of the sixteenth century. Ireland, Scotland, the northern shires<sup>6</sup> of England, Bavaria, Belgium, part of Switzerland, all France north of the Loire, with portions of Germany, were impregnated with the spirit of the Scotch Church, traversed by Celtic missionaries, peopled with Celtic monasteries,

<sup>5</sup> *Namely, the silence of the Italian monks in the Council of Maçon.*

<sup>6</sup> *Perhaps the midland also.*

and accustomed to send their young men to be educated in Irish colleges ; in fact, Ireland was a great centre of ecclesiastical civilization, and its temper was vehemently opposed to that of Rome. In many little ways we may trace the Celtic spirit growing and pushing forward, disclosing itself more and more, getting consistency through an increasing consciousness of its own strength, until a schism seemed actually threatening. It pleased God of His mercy to interpose. The Roman mission of St. Gregory to the Saxons appears in this point of view like an inspiration ; the energy of the Roman system began to develope itself close by the threshold of the Celtic Church, and ultimately absorbed it, without persecution or destruction. What the Roman mission did for the British Isles, the Carlovingians did for France, Belgium, and Bavaria : it was their policy, their evident *line*, to use a familiar word, to attach themselves to the pope, and to identify themselves with the Roman movement, just as Clothaire and Dagobert were partizans of the Irish system. But what was the worldly policy of the Carlovingians was something of far deeper import to the welfare of the Church ; it was overruled to the absorbing of the rival system into the system of Rome ; and so health was restored to the whole of western Christendom. Now supposing this to be not an exaggerated view of the state of things, we may perceive the real importance of the Scottish usages above and beyond their seemingly trivial formalism ; and further, we can fix more accurately the precise place which St. Wilfrid occupies in English church history. The Celtic feeling, Celtic rule, Celtic usages, had risen like a flood over the traces of St. Paulinus' holy work. The bishops and the monks were *the children of Iona*, and the people might well follow *them, for they were veritable Saints*. Wilfrid was the

Augustine of the northern shires : in him Rome gave battle to the opposing spirit in one of its chief strongholds, and prevailed. And it pleased God that he who had this lofty mission to fulfil should also be a great and blessed Saint.

Wilfrid does not appear to have remained long at Stamford. His early associations bound him to the north, and it was there his sphere of action lay. Some time before this, and probably during Wilfrid's absence abroad, Alfrid had founded a monastery at Ripon in Yorkshire, in which he was now anxious to bring about a reform ; in other words to compel the Scottish monks to adopt the Roman usages. But they resisted, and preferred to surrender the place rather than forego their hereditary customs. Alfrid bestowed the monastery with its endowment upon Wilfrid. But he was anxious to have the Saint for his spiritual director, and endeavoured to have him ordained priest. Agilbert, the bishop of Dorchester, and afterwards bishop of Paris, happened to be resident in his court at that time, and to him Alfrid made application. The history of Agilbert has some singular points of resemblance to that of Wilfrid. Holy man as he was, he became distasteful to king Kenwalch because of the foreign accent with which he pronounced Saxon, and further from his occasionally preaching or speaking in French, which the king did not understand. Kenwalch, unable to drive Agilbert from his see, arbitrarily divided the bishopric, created the new see of Winchester, and appointed to it bishop Wine, who had been consecrated abroad. The whole action shews in what peril the rights and liberties of the Saxon Church then stood, and what an *urgent call* there was for a vigorous resistance to such a *debasing tyranny*. It is painfully instructive to remem-

ber that Wine, the obtruded bishop, was the father of simony in England: surely this is a pregnant fact. Agilbert very properly refused to sanction an ecclesiastical change in which the Church had not been consulted, and he was in consequence obliged to retire from the dominions of Kenwalch. The persecuted bishop fled first to the court of Alfrid, and after some stay there, during which he helped forward the Roman movement, he went into France, and was ultimately made bishop of Paris.

Alfrid told Agilbert that Wilfrid had but lately come from Rome, and that he was a person of singular merit, learned yet humble, docile but plain-spoken, kind-hearted but with a practical authoritative way about him, calculated to influence persons extremely. Agilbert replied that such a man ought rather to be a bishop than a priest, and his words were probably not without weight in the mind of Alfrid, and shortly brought forth fruit. Wilfrid's ordination took place either in 662 or 663; and we read that as abbot of Ripon he was noticed for his extreme humility, his bodily austerities and long prayers, but above all for his goodness to the widow and the orphan. Meanwhile he was not without business of an external kind. Whether it was that ecclesiastics consulted him or that Alfrid acted on his advice in matters connected with the Church, we read that his fame for expertness in such things spread far and wide. In 664 an occurrence took place which brought him out upon the stormy scene of action. Henceforth Wilfrid has no private life; nothing but the Lord's "*Quiescite pusillum,*" from time to time resorted to for his soul's health, the *chief schoolhouse* of the Saints, but of whose secrets *history has nothing to reveal.*

The year 664 was a very eventful one in the history of the Saxon Church, and that for many reasons. Our attention is chiefly called to the Council of Whitby, the part Wilfrid took in it, and the decision come to with regard to the Scottish and Roman usages, particularly in reference to the observation of Easter. A few words may be necessary on this subject. The error of the Quartodecimans, condemned by the Nicene Council, consisted in following the custom of the Jews : thus, Easter might or might not fall on a Sunday, being invariably the fourteenth day of the first lunar month nearest the spring equinox. Now, it is inaccurate to call the Scots Quartodecimans, though it is by no means uncommon to do so. They always kept Easter on a Sunday, and only on the fourteenth day of the Quartodecimans when it chanced to be a Sunday. The Scotch calculation was erroneous, and their practice not in harmony with that of the catholic Church ; yet they ran counter to no formally expressed decision of the Church, and therefore were not overtly schismatics, though on the verge of schism, as non-conformity ever is at its best estate. The Scotch difference, then, was not a light one, for it infringed the sacred unity of the Church ; and by assuming an attitude of opposition to the great body of Christendom, it must certainly,—the more certainly because of the simply ritual character of the eccentric usage,—produce an uncatholic temper in the section of the Church where it prevailed. The greatness and the littleness of matters connected with the Church depend in no slight measure upon the love wherewith the men of any particular age regard the sanctities of the catholic faith ; and this is a sufficient *answer*, in passing, to the shallow sneers which the *vehemence* of the paschal controversy provokes in men

not habituated to meditation on the Lord's Passion, or the sweet strictness of the Lent fast, and who therefore disesteem the solemn joy of Easter wherein the Communion of Saints is so aptly and so deeply realized.

The history of the sundry attempts made to introduce the Roman usage may be thus briefly sketched.<sup>7</sup> The first was that of St. Augustine, and this was followed by a treatise of Cumman, a Scotch monk, who had joined himself to the Roman movement, and wrote an elaborate letter to Segienus, abbot of Iona, to justify his conduct. When St. Finan succeeded St. Aidan in the see of Lindisfarne, Ronan, a Scotch monk, educated in France or Italy, mooted the question again among the monks of Lindisfarne, and that too with considerable effect, though he failed in persuading the bishop. Doubtless it was the sensation produced by Ronan, which created the willingness shewn by the monks when Wilfrid expressed his doubts in the monastery, and proposed his journey to Rome. The fourth raising of the question fell in the year 664 at the very Council of Whitby, in whose proceedings Wilfrid took a leading part.

The Council took place in the early part of the year, as is proved by the brief episcopate of Tuda. The Scotch party was represented by St. Hilda the abbess of Whitby, bishop Colman and his clergy, bishop Cedd, and king Oswy; the Roman party by bishop Agilbert, the priests Agatho and Wilfrid, James, the deacon of St. Paulinus, a most venerable man surely in the sight of the Council as witnessing to the first conversion of the country, Romanus, a Kentish priest, who had come into the north with the queen Eanfleda, and finally by king Alfrid. St. Cedd appears to have acted as interpreter

<sup>7</sup> *Mabillon, præf. in Sæc. iii. Ben. sect. i.*

when necessary. It was a solemn day for the north when all these Saints met at Whitby in council, with no less an end before them than a reverential seeking for catholic unity on the one hand, and a laudable jealousy for the sacredness of hereditary religion on the other. Wilfrid's heart beat high that day ; how had he labored for this end, as well as dreamed of it ! His travels, his learning, his actions, seemed to concentrate here ; the question was, so to speak, in an assailable position, capable of being brought to a practical decision. The actual narrative we cannot do better than give in St. Bede's own words.<sup>8</sup>

“King Oswy first observed, that it behoved those who served one God to observe the same rule of life ; and as they all expected the same kingdom in heaven, so they ought not to differ in the celebration of the Divine mysteries ; but rather to enquire which was the truest tradition, that the same might be followed by all. He then commanded his bishop Colman first to declare what the custom was, which he observed, and whence it derived its origin. Then Colman said, ‘The Easter which I keep, I received from my elders, who sent me bishop hither. All our forefathers, men beloved of God, are known to have kept it after the same manner ; and that the same may not seem to any contemptible or worthy to be rejected, it is the same which St. John the evangelist, the disciple beloved of our Lord, with all the Churches over which he presided, is recorded to have observed.’ Having said thus much, and more to the like effect, the king commanded Agilbert to shew whence his custom of keeping Easter was derived, or on what authority it was grounded. Agilbert answered,

<sup>8</sup> Lib. iii. c. 25.

‘ I desire that my disciple, the priest Wilfrid, may speak in my stead ; because we both concur with the other followers of the ecclesiastical tradition that are here present, and he can better explain our opinion in the English language, than I can by an interpreter.’

“ Then Wilfrid being ordered by the king to speak, delivered himself thus : ‘ The Easter which we observe we saw celebrated by all at Rome, where the blessed apostles Peter and Paul taught, suffered, and were buried ; we saw the same done in Italy and in France, when we travelled through those countries for pilgrimage and prayer. We find the same practised in Africa, Asia, Egypt, Greece, and all the world, wherever the Church of Christ is spread abroad, through several nations and tongues at one and the same time ; except only these and their accomplices in obstinacy, I mean the Picts and the Britons, who foolishly, in these two remote islands of the world, and only in part even of them, oppose all the rest of the universe.’ When he had so said, Colman answered, ‘ It is strange that you will call our labors foolish, wherein we follow the example of so great an apostle, who was thought worthy to lay his head on our Lord’s Bosom, when all the world knows him to have lived most wisely.’ Wilfrid replied, ‘ Far be it from us to charge John with folly, for he literally observed the precepts of the Jewish law, whilst the Church judaized in many points, and the apostles were not able at once to cast off all the observances of the law which had been instituted by God : as it is necessary that all who come to the faith should forsake the idols which were invented by devils, that they might not give scandal to the Jews that were among the Gentiles. *For this reason it was, that Paul circumcised Timothy, that he offered sacrifice in the temple, that he*

shaved his head with Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth, for no other advantage than to avoid giving scandal to the Jews. Hence it was that James said to the same Paul, You see, brother, how many thousands of the Jews have believed ; and they are all zealous for the law. And yet, at this time, the Gospel spreading throughout the world, it is needless,—nay, it is not lawful, for the faithful either to be circumcised, or to offer up to God sacrifices of flesh. So John, pursuant to the custom of the law, began the celebration of the feast of Easter on the fourteenth day of the first month, in the evening, not regarding whether the same happened on a Saturday, on any other day. But, when Peter preached at Rome, being mindful that our Lord arose from the dead and gave the world the hopes of resurrection on the first day after the sabbath, he understood that Easter ought to be observed, so as always to stay till the rising of the moon on the fourteenth day of the first moon, in the evening, according to the custom and precepts of the law, even as John did. And when that came, if the Lord's day (then called the first day after the sabbath) was the next day, he began that very evening to keep Easter, as we all do at this day. But if the Lord's day did not fall the next morning after the fourteenth moon, but on the sixteenth, or the seventeenth, or any other moon till the twenty-first, he waited for that, and on the Saturday before, in the evening, began to observe the holy solemnity of Easter. Thus it came to pass, that Easter Sunday was only kept from the fifteenth moon to the twenty-first. Nor does this evangelical and apostolic tradition abolish the law, but rather fulfil it ; the command being to keep the passover from the fourteenth moon of the first month in the evening to the twenty-first moon of the same month, in the evening ; which

observance all the successors of St. John in Asia, since his death, and all the Church throughout the world, have since followed ; and that this is the true Easter, and the only one to be kept by the faithful, was not newly decreed by the Council of Nice, but only confirmed afresh, as the Church history informs us. Thus it appears that you, Colman, neither follow the example of John, as you imagine, nor that of Peter, whose traditions you knowingly contradict ; and that you neither agree with the law nor the Gospel in the keeping of your Easter. For John, keeping the Paschal time according to the degree of the Mosaic law, had no regard to the first day after the Sabbath, which you do not practise, who celebrate Easter only on the first day after the Sabbath. Peter kept Easter Sunday between the fifteenth and the twenty-first moon, which you do not, but keep Easter Sunday from the fourteenth to the twentieth moon ; so that you often begin Easter on the thirteenth moon in the evening, whereof neither the law made any mention ; nor did our Lord, the author and giver of the Gospel, on that day, but on the fourteenth, either eat the old passover in the evening, or deliver the sacraments of the New Testament, to be celebrated by the Church, in memory of his Passion. Besides, in your celebration of Easter, you utterly exclude the twenty-first moon, which the law ordered to be principally observed. Thus, as I said before, you agree neither with John nor Peter, nor with the law, nor the Gospel, in the celebration of the greatest festival.'

"To this Colman rejoined, 'Did Anatolius, a holy man, and much commended in Church history, act contrary to the law and the Gospel, when he wrote that *Easter was to be celebrated from the fourteenth to the twentieth ? Is it to be believed that our most reverend*

father Columba, and his successors, men beloved by God, who kept Easter after the same manner, thought or acted contrary to the Divine Writings? Whereas there were many among them, whose sanctity is testified by heavenly signs and the working of miracles, whose life, customs and discipline, I never cease to follow, not questioning their being Saints in heaven.'

"'It is evident,' said Wilfrid, 'that Anatolius was a most holy, learned, and commendable man; but what have you to do with him, since you do not observe his decrees? For he, following the rule of truth in his Easter, appointed a revolution of nineteen years, which either you are ignorant of, or, if you know it, though it is kept by the whole Church of Christ, yet you despise it. He so computed the fourteenth moon in the Easter of our Lord, that according to the custom of the Egyptians, he acknowledged it to be the fifteenth moon in the evening; so in like manner he assigned the twentieth to Easter Sunday, as believing that to be the twenty-first moon, when the sun had set; which rule and distinction of his it appears you are ignorant of, in that you sometimes keep Easter before the full of the moon, that is, on the thirteenth day. Concerning your father Columba and his followers, whose sanctity you say you imitate, and whose rules and precepts you observe, which have been confirmed by signs from heaven, I may answer, that when many on the day of judgment shall say to our Lord, that in His Name they prophesied and cast out devils, and wrought many wonders, our Lord will reply that He never knew them. But far be it from me that I should say so of your fathers, because it is much more just to believe what is good than what is evil of persons whom *one does not know*. Wherefore I do not deny those to *have been God's servants*, and beloved by Him, who with

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rustic simplicity, but pious intentions, have themselves loved Him. Nor do I think that such keeping of Easter was very prejudicial to them, as long as none came to shew them a more perfect rule ; and yet I do believe that they, if any catholic adviser had come among them, would have as readily followed his admonitions, as they are known to have kept those commandments of God which they had learned and knew. But as for you and your companions, you certainly sin if, having heard the decrees of the Apostolic See and of the Universal Church, and that the same is confirmed by Holy Writ, you refuse to follow them ; for, though your fathers were holy, do you think that their small number, in a corner of the remotest island, is to be preferred before the Universal Church of Christ throughout the world ? And if that Columba of yours (and I may say, ours also, if he was Christ's servant,) was a holy man and powerful in miracles, yet could he be preferred before the most blessed prince of the apostles, to whom our Lord said, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and to thee I will give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven ? ' ' 9

King Oswy, as we have already intimated, was strongly attached to the Scottish usages, but the speech of Wilfrid seems to have been quite convincing ; at all events his predilections were for the moment overborne by the abbot's eloquence. Common sense, when prejudice does not come in the way, is no mean theologian, and king Oswy appears at once to have divined the proper test by which to try the catholicity of a doctrine or

<sup>9</sup> *Dr. Giles' Translation* has been used in this extract, with a few verbal changes.

a rite. Wilfrid had scarcely concluded the text regarding St. Peter when the king turned to the bishop of Lindisfarne, and said, "Is it true, Colman, that these words were spoken to Peter by our Lord?" He replied, "It is true, O king." "Then," rejoined Oswy, "can you show any such power given to your Columba?" Colman answered, "None." "Then," added the king, "do you both agree that these words were principally directed to Peter, and that the keys of heaven were given to him by our Lord?" Both Wilfrid and Colman answered, "We do." Whereupon Oswy replied, "And I also say unto you, that he is the doorkeeper, whom I will not contradict, but will, as far as I know and am able, in all things obey his decrees, lest, when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven, there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to have the keys." The decision of the Council was, that it was better to abandon the old imperfect custom and conform to the Roman practice.

This judgment of the Council of Whitby was a great step towards the consummation of Wilfrid's hopes. In his speech he had laid open the true disease of England, the disease which was then drawing it onward to the brink of schism, which clung to it more or less, succouring the evil and baffling the good, even up to the primacy of Archbishop Warham; which plunged it into that depth of sacrilege, heresy, and libertinism, in which it has lain since the time of Henry VIII., and has hitherto retarded its penitence and self-abasement. He referred the stubborn non-conformity of his times to that narrow temper of self-praise fostered by our insular position, leading the great mass of common minds to overlook with a *bigoted superciliousness* almost the very existence of the *Universal Church*, and to disesteem the privileges of

communion with it. A *particular* church, priding itself upon its separate rights and independent jurisdiction, must end at last in arrogating to itself an inward purity, a liberty of change, and an empire over the individual conscience far more stringent and tyrannous than was ever claimed by the Universal Church. In other words, nationalism must result in the meanest form of bigotry, and, as being essentially demoralizing, must be a fearful heresy in theology. Meanwhile it should not be forgotten that much is to be said, very much indeed, for the pertinacity of St. Colman, and his retirement from his see. A controversy and a separation where both parties were holy men, and both at this day venerated by the Church—this is a fact which nothing but the catholic Church can display, a noble phenomenon not rare in her miraculous history.

This controversy about Easter was one of such great importance in the history of the Saxon Church, as in reality going deeper than itself, and affecting the vitals of a Church, and Wilfrid took such a leading part in the happy settlement of the question, that it seems quite necessary to carry on and conclude in his life the further history of the debate. After the Council of Whitby, St. Colman and his adherents retired into Scotland ; and it was into that country that the war against the Scottish usages was carried. It was about the year 690, twenty-six years after this Council, that St. Adamnan, the abbot of Iona, came into England on business. He was a man whose mind had been enlarged by foreign travel, and therefore, as being more free from bigotry, was also more likely to appreciate the many privileges of catholic uniformity. He was struck with the Roman *usages in England*, and made them his study ; the consequence of which was an ardent adoption of them. O

his return into Scotland he exerted all his influence to bring about conformity with the Holy Roman Church ; he extended his labors even into Ireland. Great success appears to have followed ; indeed, the greater part of the Irish abandoned their faulty cycle, and many in the British Church likewise. But a prophet is without honor in his own country ; abbot though he was, his own monks of Iona resisted the change, and he was unable to force it upon them. Iona had so long taken the lead, as a kind of ecclesiastical metropolis, the university of the Scottish system, that it was natural to expect a vigorous opposition there. Paltry motives would reinforce worthy motives, and so create a popular clamor in support of such as were honestly and devoutly attached to their hereditary usages. In the beginning of the eighth century the Church of the West Saxons felt the inconveniences of non-conformity in the practices of the numerous British congregations subject to that nation. A synod was held, and Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, was instructed to write a treatise on the Easter question, in order to reduce the Britons to conformity. St. Bede describes it as a book of singular merit, and adds that so persuasive was it that it induced many to forego their ancient custom and adopt the catholic celebration of our Lord's resurrection. In 710, or about that year, Naitan, king of the Picts, sent messengers to St. Ceolfrid, abbot of Jarrow, to receive instruction in Roman usages, and Ceolfrid's letter seems to have done a very great deal both to spread and consolidate the following of Roman traditions. But the important letter itself, as well as the interesting circumstances connected with it, belong rather to the life of the holy author himself.

*The conclusion of this controversy, and the reduction of Iona itself to catholic uniformity, must be entered upon*

somewhat more at length. Wilfrid was the chosen instrument to bring about this happy issue in the Northumbrian Church; but in the way of Christian retribution, the victory was not complete. The Scottish Church had been a second mother to the Northumbrian Church, and it had filled the throne of Lindisfarne with four blessed Saints. It was needful that the English daughter should convey to the Scottish mother that better thing which had been given to her, full communion of rites as well as doctrines with the Universal Church. The man who finished Wilfrid's work was Egbert, and that was fifty-two years after the Council of Whitby.<sup>1</sup>

The year of the Council, 664, was also distinguished by a fearful pestilence; the man who was destined to complete Wilfrid's work seems to have learnt his vocation from his sufferings in that disease, and in the very year when Wilfrid had gained his victory in Northumberland. So is Providence silently carrying out its designs in many places at once, and accomplishing its merciful intentions through long obscure preparations. We now and then catch a glimpse of these parallel lines, far apart, often seemingly diverging and swerving the wrong way; and when history lays bare such things, she is fulfilling her highest function, and our business is to acknowledge and adore. In this very year, then, 664, the pestilence reached a monastery in Ireland, called Rathmelsigi. It was at that time a very general custom for English youths to frequent the Scottish monasteries in Ireland, as well for education as advancement in spiritual perfection. The hospitable Scots received

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon seems to have quoted Bede inaccurately, when he says that Egbert's labors were only one year after the letter of St. Ceolfrid. St. Bede says, "*nec multo post,*" not *anno insequente*, and a few lines further on specifies the year, 716.

all who came, fed them daily without any charge, furnished them with books to read, and cheerfully instructed those who sought for advice. In this monastery of Rathmelsigi were two English youths, brothers, named Ethelhun and Egbert, whose third brother, Ethelwin, was afterwards bishop of Lincoln, and died in the odor of sanctity. So fatal was the plague in that house that at length all died but these two brothers, and they were grievously sick, and in expectation of death. Egbert had still strength to leave the infirmary, and going aside into a place where he could be secret, he meditated upon the sins of his past life. Who shall confront that vision and remain unmoved? Such possession did the spirit of compunction take of Egbert's whole being, that the tears gushed out from his eyes, and in an agony of earnestness he prayed that he might not die yet, but be kept alive to do penance for the sins of his careless boyhood. He vowed, if God would deign to prolong his life, to recite the whole Psalter daily, besides the Canonical Hours, unless prevented by sickness, and to fast one whole day and night every week, and further to exile himself from his native land, and be a stranger and a wanderer his whole life long, for Christ's sake and the punishment of his youthful sins. After making this vow, he returned into the infirmary, where he found his brother Ethelhun asleep. He also lay down, and remained quiet, but wakeful. Shortly afterwards Ethelhun awoke, and looking upon Egbert, said, "Alas! brother Egbert, what have you done? I was in hopes that we should have entered together into life everlasting; but know that what you prayed for is granted." For God had revealed Egbert's vow to his brother in a dream, with *an assurance that it was accepted.* The next night *Ethelhun entered into his rest, and Egbert slowly re-*

covered. Such were the beginnings of the Saint whom God raised up to complete St. Wilfrid's work. His earnest piety, his acts and austerities, his connection with Willebrord and the German missions, will be related in his own life. It is enough to state here, that in 716, the seventy-seventh of the Saint's life, he won over the monks of Iona by his eloquence and gentle demeanor, and thus established Roman traditions and usages in the very head-quarters of the old Scottish customs. And this may be considered the termination of that long and vexing controversy which had so often menaced the Church with overt schism. The cursory sketch here given is sufficient to shew how far St. Wilfrid aided the settlement of it, and that he is in fact the person to whom we owe the reduction of the Northumbrian Church to catholic uniformity.

The fearful pestilence of 664 gathered many of the Saxon Saints into the garner of the Lord. Two bishops fell victims to it in Northumbria ; St. Cedd, the bishop of London, who from time to time retired into his monastery in the north, and likewise Tuda, the bishop of Lindisfarne. The vacancy caused by the death of this latter prelate was the source of Wilfrid's long and sanctifying troubles. It would appear that for some time after the Council of Whitby, king Oswy was a resolute defender of the Roman usages,—the more zealous, perhaps, in order to make amends for his former strenuousness in behalf of the Scottish traditions ; and that afterwards his fervor cooled down, and he reverted to his former partialities in behalf of his hereditary customs. This conjecture seems the only explanation of a difficult and perplexing chapter in Wilfrid's history.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Mr. Soames says, Wilfrid disgusted people by going about France*

There is no doubt that Alfrid proposed the elevation of Wilfrid to the vacant throne of Lindisfarne, and it is said that every one agreed he was the fittest person, from his austere life, wonderful knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, devout study of the lives of the Saints, and incessant perusal of the ecclesiastical canons. Oswy certainly assented to Wilfrid's nomination, even if he did not take an active part in the matter. Wilfrid most humbly pleaded his own unworthiness, neither did he accept the weighty burden of the episcopate till it became a scruple with him, lest he should be rejecting a manifestly Divine vocation. But when he had consented to undertake this high office in the Church, other scruples arose in his mind of a very serious nature. The Saxon Church was in a state of deplorable confusion : the see of Canterbury was without a bishop ; it was exceedingly doubtful whether the ordination of any of the existing bishops, except Wine, of the West Saxons, had been canonical ; it was quite open to a question whether the Scottish non-conformity did not amount to schism, when Rome had spoken so plainly about the matter ; and lastly, there was a gross, and open, and unresisted Erastianism throughout the island, most grievous to a pious mind, and full of perplexity. Bishop Agilbert seemed almost to have given the system up : though he had been both witness and agent in the steps taken by the Council of Whitby to catholicize the English Church, yet he had now retired into France ; and his example would greatly enhance the difficulty which tender consciences would feel in positions of trust, as authorized rulers or teachers. Wilfrid therefore spoke his mind openly to the two kings. He said it was far from his wish to vilify the

*parading his episcopal dignity and pomp ; but he does not vouchsafe to give us his authority for the assertion.*

existing bishops, but that their position, with reference to the apostolic see, was such, that he could not submit to receive consecration at their hands. In short, he made it a condition of his acceptance of the bishopric of Lindisfarne, that he should be sent into France to receive an undeniably canonical consecration.

To many persons in our days these scruples will seem so unreal as to be unintelligible ; while to others, and those not a few, they will have a distressing reality. Of course those who do not believe in the divine institution of the Visible Church and the mysteriousness of her privileges, will perceive in St. Wilfrid's hesitation nothing but a superstitious and judaizing spirit ; more especially when, through long disesteem of apostolic order, they have learned to look on jealousy for catholic doctrines and the high-minded anathemas of Holy Church as bigotry, ignorance, or at best, great uncharitableness. It is quite impossible for any one to sustain for long an affectionate jealousy about the doctrines which concern the Divine Person and Two Natures of our Lord, who is not likewise exceedingly jealous for the divine forms, unity, ritual and succession of the Visible Church. The preservation of true saving doctrine is tied to the formal constitution of the Visible Church just as much, and with as infrequent exceptions, as the gift of regeneration is tied to the form of Baptism, or the Justifying Presence of Christ consigned to the Sacrifice of the Altar. The world *assumes* the divine forms of the Church to be mere externals, and arguing from its own unwarrantable premiss, condemns the Saints as verbal disputants and sticklers for empty ceremonial. No wonder, then, that in these days, St. Wilfrid's scruples should be matter of derision. But there are others who find the present state of things only too fruitful in similar perplexities

and the danger is not slight of their putting themselves into a false position in consequence of their distress. Under any circumstances the office of ecclesiastical rulers, teachers, and priests, is full of difficulty from its double nature. They who bear it have not only the government and discipline of themselves to look to, their growth, mutations, lapses, as lay Christians have, but to this they superadd another entire second life, through their solemn and sacramental relations to others. Is it not then a very fearful thing for them to have a doubt cast on the efficacy of their priesthood, the reality of those tremendous acts which they have performed in the name of priests, and the truthfulness of their absolutions and consecrations? and if we further assume the possible cases of ailing health and broken spirits, what a burden must it be for reason to bear, and not give way? Indeed, it is hardly right to go on dwelling upon it. Enough has been said to suggest more: there is *some* support in seeing that so great a Saint as Wilfrid keenly felt a somewhat similar position, and did not hesitate to act at much cost upon these feelings. But, further than this, is there not almost incalculable comfort in reflecting on the actual history? Wilfrid stood, as all men stand in their generation, amidst the blinding battle which the present always is: he was oppressed with doubts about the system of his Church, because of the relation in which it stood to the chief bishop: he was able at once, though with some pains, to clear up his position. This latter mercy may be denied to us; but we, looking at Wilfrid's days as part of the past, are permitted to see the Church whose system he doubted of recognized as an *integral* part of the Body Catholic, the prelates whose *consecration* he distrusted canonized as Saints, his own *rival*, whose ordination was indisputably uncanonical,

now revered as one of our holiest English bishops. When we naturally couple together, almost without thought, St. Wilfrid and St. Chad, we read ourselves a lesson, which, if we would only receive it, is full of deepest consolation and most effectual incentives to strictness and holiness of life, and a quiet occupying of ourselves with present duties.

Wilfrid was about thirty years of age when he left England to seek consecration at the hands of the French bishops. Agilbert, who had ordained him priest, was at this time bishop of Paris, and Wilfrid naturally had recourse to him. Eleven other bishops assisted at his consecration, which took place at Compiègne ; and, according to the existing ceremonial of the French Church, the new prelate was carried in a golden chair by his brother bishops, singing hymns of joy ; none but bishops being allowed to touch the chair. It does not appear how long Wilfrid remained in France ; for some reason or other he delayed his return for a considerable time. In crossing the sea he and his clergy are described as sitting upon the deck and chanting psalms ; but the voyage was not so favorable as they had expected. When they were midway between the two shores a dreadful storm arose, which cast them on the coast of the South Saxons. The storm was followed by an unusual ebb of the sea, so that the vessel was left high up on the sand. The people came down to seize upon the wreck, and take the prisoners. Wilfrid's band was about one hundred and twenty, very small in comparison of the multitude of the country people : he therefore endeavoured to come to terms with them, promising a considerable ransom if no violence was used. The country people, who were *pagans*, had with them a priest, who, according to his *rites*, stood upon a hill, like Balaam, to curse the stran-

gers. While he was in the very act of pronouncing his malediction one of Wilfrid's men slung a stone at him, and killed him on the spot. The idolaters rushed furiously upon the little band ; Wilfrid and his clergy knelt upon the shore to pray, and, through the mercy of God, the people were utterly routed, with the loss of only five men of Wilfrid's party. At the turn of the tide the sea returned to its just limits ; the vessel floated off, and with a favorable wind entered the port of Sandwich.

Meanwhile affairs had been taking a very unhappy turn in the north. Oswy had persons about him who viewed Wilfrid with jealous eyes on account of the active part which he had taken against the Scottish usages, and the fervor of the king's conversion had begun to cool down. It is not improbable that there was mingled with this some jealousy and distrust of Alfrid, whose influence was greater than his father wished it to be : and Alfrid had so completely and energetically identified himself with the Romanizing movement in the Northumbrian Church that he was always sure of a very formidable party. Oswy's feelings were artfully worked upon by some of his courtiers, and at length the prolonged absence of Wilfrid was made a pretext for nominating some one else to his see. St. Chad was the person whom Oswy selected, and he was consecrated by Wine, the bishop of Winchester, assisted by two British bishops. Wilfrid, therefore, on his arrival in the north, found his throne uncanonically occupied by St. Chad. He was not a man likely to relinquish a right for the sake of ease and quietness, when the interests of the Church were concerned ; but he was likewise a Saint : and he doubtless discerned something in the aspect of the times *which satisfied him that retirement and self-restraint*

and patient waiting upon God were clearly duties, however repugnant to the natural activity and practical turn of his mind. Only thirty years of age, and how much of his work already done! Was it not, indeed, high time for a season of self-seclusion, of secret discipline, of cleansing austerities, of solitary communion with God? He retired, therefore, to his monastery at Ripon, and gave himself up to the study and acquirement of Christian perfection in the ascetic exercises of a conventual life. It was a pause in his troubled life: there is not much to tell, but there is much to think upon.

It was not till the year 669 that he was restored to his bishopric, but the intervening years were not wholly spent in the secrecy of his monastery. In 659 the Mercians had rebelled against Oswy, who, after the death of Peada, had united Mercia to his own dominions. The Mercians, being successful, raised Wulfere, Penda's second son, to the vacant throne. At the time of his accession Wulfere was a pagan, but soon afterwards became a zealous believer. From his foundation at Stamford, which he, no doubt, visited from time to time, Wilfrid was well known among the Mercians, and as they were at that time without a bishop, Wulfere requested him to exercise his episcopal functions in that country. The holy bishop soon came to have great influence over the king, so that at last he governed almost entirely by Wilfrid's counsels, and, at Wilfrid's request, founded a great number of monasteries in his kingdom. It was probably then that the monastery of Oundle was founded.

During this time the see of Canterbury was vacant. St. Deusdedit died in 664, and in the ensuing year, Oswy, who was at that time the chief English sovereign, joining with *Egbert of Kent*, chose Wighard for the new archbishop, and sent him to Rome for consecration. There

he died, and from one cause or another, his successor, St. Theodore, did not arrive at Canterbury till the month of May, 669. Many inconveniences of course resulted from the want of an archbishop; and king Egbert accordingly sent for Wilfrid to ordain clergy and to administer the diocese till the arrival of the new primate. No sooner, however, did he receive notice of the approach of St. Theodore than he left Kent and retired into the north. The treasures which he carried away from Canterbury were characteristic,—two chanters, Eddi and Eona, well skilled in the Roman method of singing, and a band of masons and other artificers for church-building.<sup>3</sup> Thus accompanied, he went into Yorkshire, to abide patiently the interference of the new archbishop in the matter of the unjust usurpation of his see. This interference was not long delayed. The same year of his arrival in England, St. Theodore made a general visitation of the island; and it would appear that he found everything in disorder and confusion, the natural result of neglecting the Roman traditions of St. Gregory and St. Augustine. Of course the humble and holy Chad was deposed, nor was he loth to lay aside the perilous dignity of the episcopate. His consecration was clearly uncanonical, as he had been intruded into another's see; but, independent of this, there appears to have been something faulty in the manner of it, as we are told that St. Theodore, greatly admiring his humility, determined he should be a bishop in some other see, and perfected his consecration in a catholic

<sup>3</sup> Mabillon (xv. 64) says, Wilfrid *then* brought the Rule of St. Benedict from Canterbury, and introduced it into the north. This is *plainly inaccurate*: Wilfrid brought it from Rome, not from Canterbury, and had already established it to some considerable extent in *the north*.

way. Wilfrid was thus put in possession of his see, and governed it in laborious peace for nine whole years.

When a man is raised up to do some special work in the world, the idea of it seems completely to master his whole life. It becomes impregnated with the high principle on which he acts, so that every detail of it looks one way, and has one only meaning. It is the aspect which a life of this kind presents to ordinary minds which leads them to call it bigotry, narrowness, and a want of large-heartedness : for the unvarying consistency of a high principle, and the ubiquity of its influence, and its constant appearance in trivial matters where it was not looked for and seems out of place, are little understood by men in general, whose lives are not steered by the light of any one principle at all, but are at the capricious mercy of circumstances rather than in command of them. It has been already shewn at what an early age Wilfrid detected the unsoundness of the Church in the north of England, with what distinctness he perceived that devotion to Rome was the sole remedy for the ailing times, and with what promptness he gave himself up to the cultivation of that feeling in himself, and the propagation of it amongst others. This becomes more and more developed as life goes on. The see of Lindisfarne had become vacant ; he had been preferred to it ; he had been kept out of it by an uncanonical intrusion ; he had been restored by the new primate from Rome. Yet there is not a word of Lindisfarne, though in that holy island he had received his early education ; neither is there a word of any change ; but all at once Wilfrid is bishop, not of Lindisfarne, but of York ! The succession of the Scottish throne is interrupted ; the *intervening past* is as it were put aside, and Wilfrid succeeds, not to Aidan, and Finan, and Colman, and Tuda.

but to St. Paulinus. Surely the riddle is not hard to find out : such a change in Wilfrid's hands needs no interpretation. Was it foolish and puerile, if he thought anything more of it than as a matter of diocesan convenience ? Anyhow it was wonderfully consistent, and consistency has a great look of principle.

And what is the first thing which we read of the new bishop of York ?—bishop only, for St. Paulinus had carried the pall away ; and great gifts forfeited are not retrieved all at once, lest they should fall a second time into a worse contempt. What is Wilfrid's first act ? The cathedral of St. Paulinus, where St. Edwin was baptized, and which St. Oswald had completed—it had missed its bishops sadly. The foundations had settled, and so the walls had cracked, the rain oozed through the yawning roof, the windows<sup>4</sup> were unglazed, and birds' nests hung in an unsightly way about the bare mullions, and the pillars and internal walls ran down with green slime or were covered with a growth of dripping moss ; and worse even than this, the furniture of the altar and the vessels for the Blessed Sacrifice were mean, outworn, indecent. The cathedral of York, therefore, was Wilfrid's first care. He restored the walls, leaded the roof, glazed the windows, scraped the pillars, and provided sumptuous garniture for the altar. He gave, moreover, a copy of the four Gospels written in gold letters on a purple ground, and some copies of the Bible adorned with gold and gems. His *cæmentarii* at Canterbury, and other artificers, went to work first on the cathedral of York ; but they had no easy life of it. When one thing was done, Wilfrid had another ready, and to the

<sup>4</sup> *The windows before were filled with lattices of wood and linen curtains.*

masons he might perhaps sometimes seem a little too impatient for a Saint. Next perhaps in dignity, certainly next, if not first, in his affections, was the abbey at Ripon ; the cathedral restored, the abbey was looked to. The church there was perhaps not worth restoring : at any rate a restoration fell far short of the princely design of Wilfrid. From the very foundations he reared an entirely new church, all of wrought stone, a sumptuousness much dwelt upon in those times, as we may see from Bede's praise of the church St. Paulinus built at Lincoln. Indeed Wilfrid was a successor of St. Paulinus in more things than in his bishopric. Round the stone church were raised goodly columns and manifold porches, the wonder of all Yorkshire, and, Wilfrid being the builder, of course it was dedicated under the name of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles and spiritual father of the Roman pontiffs. This was not all at Wilfrid's own expense. Egfrid was then the king of the Northumbrians. On his accession he had found himself involved in two wars, one in the north, with the Picts, and another in the south, with the Mercians. Egfrid was victorious over both his enemies, and by his victory over the Mercians he recovered Lincolnshire, and once more added it to his kingdom. In gratitude for this success, he endowed the abbey of Ripon most liberally, and made large contributions towards the completion of the works then going on.

It was a happy day for Wilfrid, when, in 671,<sup>5</sup> he celebrated the consecration of St. Peter's minster at Ripon. King Egfrid was there, and king Elfwin, his brother, and a concourse of abbots and magistrates, and a mixed multitude of high and low. Wilfrid preached on the

<sup>5</sup> Alban Butler fixes it in 670.

occasion, and doubtless put forth to the utmost the extraordinary powers of oratory which we are told he possessed. When the sermon was over, the bishop recited, in the audience of all the people, the gifts of the kings to the abbey of Ripon, a wise precaution as well as a grateful honor ; then followed the rite of consecration, of course after the Roman manner ; no doubt the singing was antiphonal, and conducted by Eddi and Eona : and for three days the bishop, kingly-hearted prelate as he was, entertained the two monarchs with all the splendor of monastic hospitality, which has a heartiness in it beyond all other hospitality, from the self-denial which goes before the feast, and is to follow after. There are still spots in the world where such hospitality is to be met with, and still hearts which are not likely to forget its peculiarly edifying frankness and simplicity.

But sadness is ever nigh to feasting ; this is a moral law which is rarely suspended, for it would hardly be a beneficent miracle if it were. There was sadness nigh to Wilfrid's consecration-feast—bitter herbs, the pilgrim's seasoning. Wilfrid had lived in Wulfere's court ; Wulfere's kingdom had been governed by his counsels. In the heart of many a deep wood, and by the brink of many a quiet river, convent after convent had risen up and down Mercia ; for Wilfrid's wish was Wulfere's rule. In spite then of the munificent thank-offerings which Egfrid's victory brought to the monastery at Ripon, Wilfrid's heart must have bled in secret for the misfortunes of Wulfere ;<sup>6</sup> and soon after his defeat, that broken-hearted monarch died. Who can trace the in-

<sup>6</sup> The story that Wilfrid prayed against Wulfere, because he had *taken away the monastery at Stamford from the monks of Lindisfarne seems wholly unworthy of credit.*

fluence of Wilfrid's counsels, admonitions, examples, spiritual training in that wonderful royal family of Mercia? What a picture is it to look back upon, a crowd of kinsfolk, a crowd of canonized Saints, Wilfrid, the centre of the group, forming them into Saints! Surely never was there such a family as that of Wulfere. First, there was the good king himself, sitting at the bishop's feet, and there was Ermenilda, his holy queen, herself a Saint; and then there was their daughter Wereburga, who governed Trent, and Weedon, and Hamburg, three peaceful convents, and was the patron Saint of Chester. Merwald, her brother, reigned with the pious Ethelred, and he had three fair daughters, Milburga, of Wenloch, and Mildreda, of Menstrey, and Milgitha, and their little brother Merefin, famous for his childish sanctity,—and all these were canonized Saints; and Etheldreda, and Withburga, and Sexburga, were all their kinsfolk, and Ercongota too, and the abbess of Barking, the blessed Edelburga, and Erconwald, the founder of Chertsey. And the daughters of Penda were five canonized Saints, no less than his granddaughters. And to many readers it would seem weary to tell of Wulfad, and of Ruffin, and of Rumwald, and of Tibba, and of others who were of that one royal stock, and were all Saints honored by the Holy Church. How the grace of God ran over and abounded in that peerless family! There was much grace, for there was much affliction. Yet though adversity was causing the seed to spring which Wilfrid had sown, he was not a man without a heart of flesh; for the more the affections are mortified, the more are they quickened; and there is no love so keen, so delicate, so sensitive, as the love which *animates the spare frame of the worn ascetic*; and *deeply, very deeply* we may be sure did Wilfrid mourn over

the disgrace and death of the kind, and hospitable, and saintly king of Mercia.

Still, with many griefs of heart, with many outward thwartings, he went on his way, toiling ; he kept to his work and his labor till the evening, and the evening was yet far off.

But we have not done with the cæmentarii and other artificers from Canterbury. The Minster at Ripon is finished and consecrated, and Wilfrid now moves his workmen northward. From the banks of the dashing Ure, and the woody margin of the dark-watered Nid, the bishop of York travelled to the forked valley of the romantic Tyne; and some little below the spot where the two branches of the river meet, where the town of Hexham stands, the "magnifical" work of church-building again commenced. Here St. Oswald's great battle had been fought, and his great victory won : here was his Hevenfeld, and here his wonder-working cross of perishable wood. In all the romantic north, scarce one valley can compete with the double vale of the north and south Tyne : modern science has now cloven its way through the hanging cliff, and the crumbling bank, and the branching wood, and over the tortuous, oft-encountered stream, so that its once secluded beauties of wood, rock, and water are now open to all. And there St. Wilfrid reared the abbey of St. Andrew. Eddi, the precentor, was lost in wonder. Who ever saw foundations sunk so deep as these ? What blind feeling impelled the holy architect, at all costs, to come to solid rock ? What a fancy was this of his ! Still he dug, and the trenches went on deepening and broadening till they were yawning chasms, and in them the princely bishop sunk, where *man's* eye could not see them — it was God's glory *he sought, not man's praise* — deep in those trenches foun-

dation stones 'mirifically' wrought. His columns and his porches, which he loved so much, they were even more wonderful at Hexham than they had been at Ripon. And the height and the length of the nave and aisles, people wondered at that too ; and at the secresies of the triforium still more ; but it was the bishop's design ; he felt, as others may feel, their hearts grow large in the dim vastness of our catholic temples. And the winding ways upwards and downwards, Eddi declares that the littleness of his style must not attempt to describe them ; for he saw that the bishop was inspired, like Bezaleel of old, for all agreed that on our side of the Alps was there no church like this new minster of Wilfrid's building. All honor, therefore, be to the blessed memory of him, who in those dark old times took heart and built St. Andrew's in the beautiful valley of the Tyne !

Alas ! in these modern days we measure all men by our own contractedness. We do not allow men to be able to do more than one work, or to have more than one virtue. One half of religion keeps the other half in check. We leave one thing undone lest it should lead us to neglect another. Mary chides Martha, and Martha disturbs Mary ; we are not practical, for we cannot be so unless we are contemplative, and we dare not be contemplative lest we should depreciate the importance of being practical. We dare not love God, lest it should wean us from equable love of our neighbour, and so we centre all our love upon ourselves, the sorriest of all unamiable things. Now, some may think St. Wilfrid did nothing but build material churches, and therefore that he was but an indifferent bishop. It would be a great thing if all bishops did so much as build *material churches*, for many do much less than even *that*. But a man would build very poor churches if b

did not do many other and greater things beside. There is a living Church in England now, which we trust is something more than a material church. It were sad if it were not ; for it has weathered many a storm, and ridden through some frightful gales, and well nigh gone to pieces on some terrific rocks. It would have gone to pieces if it had been nothing more than a material church. It is to be hoped it may prove a safe shelter in some very wild weather yet. Well, St. Wilfrid was one of the master builders of this same Church of ours. Ripon stands, and Hexham stands, and the Church of living stones stands too : they stand, and that is something, though they are all in a crazy state, and want new Wilfrids to them.

But what else did Wilfrid do ? He preached : he went about preaching perpetually, and the visitation of that huge diocese was no light thing in the seventh century ; it is not a light thing now, when the great palatinate of Durham has been severed from it, and the modern diocese of Ripon ; but it was a very different thing in those days, as different as a monk is from a poor soft secular. However, the bishops then were mostly monks, and their vocation carried them cheerily through a great deal of rough living. He was an eloquent preacher too, yet precise in his language, and plain in his style ; just such a preacher as St. Alfonso Liguori would have delighted in. Nay, so much did Wilfrid think of preaching—for it was safer to exalt it then than it would be now, when the christian sacraments are disesteemed—that when he signed the charter of Peterborough (if that document is not a forgery) he subscribed it thus, “ I, Wilfrid, the priest, the servant of the *Churches*, and carrier of the Gospel among the nations.” *We are told that heat and cold, wind and wet, the*

rugged roads and flooded rivers, were all as nothing to him, so perseveringly did he go up and down preaching the word. And what bishop is there with anything apostolic about him, who does not set a special value on that prerogative of his order, the conferring the sacrament of Confirmation? All the Saints have been lovers of little children: not to mention other instances, how wonderfully St. Philip Neri yearned towards them! The love of little children was, so to speak, one of the touching characteristics of our blessed Lord's human life. He can be touched in His little ones: should not the Saints, then, love to be their ministers? And when Confirmation is put off, as it often is, till the end of childhood and the beginning of boyhood, what a touching solemnity it is! Just when our three great enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, might league with our own perverse will to rifle the treasure of Baptism, this other sacrament steps in and seals it up again. At the very season when danger comes nigh at hand,—when the soul, yet weak, and somewhat, it may be, burthened with its untried and unaccustomed armour, is surrounded by the powers of darkness, the Church intervenes with this powerful sacrament, setting the seal of the Holy Spirit to the great baptismal gift which was in jeopardy. Alas! the purity of Baptism is too often polluted and obscured, as it is: but how much oftener would it be lost, how much oftener would the soul fall utterly from that illuminating grace, if it were not for the gift of Confirmation! Consider how little most boys think of religion; indeed, they appear to think much less of it than children. There seems less that is good, less that is divine, less that is honorable, less that is hopeful about boys than any other *members of Christ's Church*. It is an age which *painfully tries the faith* of parents, friends, and guardians.

The love of church, and prayer, and the Bible, and the interest in death, funerals, and all softening and sacred things, which children often have, delighting their parents' hearts, seem to pass away or be clouded over in boyhood by self-will and nascent impurity. There is a negligence of thought, a hardening of the heart, a restlessness of the soul, a deplorable worship of self, most odious and depressing to christian parents, and calling forth all their faith in the inestimable preciousness of Holy Baptism. So far as religion goes they seem to make no way with their children in boyhood. It appears that all they can do is to keep ploughing, and harrowing, and sowing, and watering a hard rock, in faith that God will make a harvest grow there some time, because He has promised to do so. To keep a *boy* from going wrong seems almost the nearest approach we can make towards persuading him to do right. Of course there are exceptions to this, exceptions which the special grace of God makes, exceptions not infrequent in young persons whose constitutions are enfeebled by some growing disease, and from whom, in merciful despite of themselves, the gay world is consequently kept at arms' length. There are exceptions, too, by God's mercy, in persons in whose constitutions there are the seeds of disease not yet developed, or who are intended in the mystery of the Divine Providence to die early. Indeed, we scarcely ever see a very pious boy without a half-thought coming into our minds that he will die soon ; as people are in the habit of saying quite proverbially, "He is too good to live : " the world, man's poor nature, bearing strange instinctive witness against itself. Yet, with the general run of men, boyhood is as has been described ; and being then so *unsatisfactory* a time, so distressingly irreligious an *age*, such a selfish barren-hearted season, it seems a mer-

ciful thing that the Holy Church should be allowed to interpose here with her sacrament of Confirmation, a fresh pledge of God's goodness, a sign of the reality of Baptism, a witness that there is good seed in the soul which must be taken care of, although there does not appear any promise of its springing yet.

What bishop, then, will not feel his deepest affections called out by the sacrament of Confirmation? Wilfrid's Confirmations seem to have formed an integral part of his preaching, for there is no ordinance so intimately connected with preaching as this. St. Augustine says, "This is to preach the Gospel, not only to teach those things which are to be said of Christ, but those also which are to be observed by every one who desires to be confederated into the society of the body of Christ,"<sup>7</sup> that is, as Bishop Taylor comments, "not only the doctrines of good life, but the mysteries of godliness, and the rituals of religion, which issue from a Divine fountain, are to be declared by him who would *fully* preach the Gospel." Even since the Reformation—if it is not almost irreverent to compare our times with those of unity—we read of a certain bishop of Chester, who, going into his diocese, where Confirmation had been long neglected, found the multitudes who thronged to that sacrament so numerous that even the churchyards would not hold them, and he was obliged to confirm in the fields, and would have been trodden to death by the throng if he had not been rescued by the magistrates.<sup>8</sup> And St. Bernard, in his Life of St. Malachi, bishop of Down and

<sup>7</sup> De Fid. et Op. ix. "Hoc enim est evangelizare Christum, non tantum docere ea quæ sunt dicenda de Christo, sed etiam quæ observanda ei, qui accedit ad compagem corporis Christi."—The narrow view of *preaching taken in these days* is nigh to very fearful heresy.

<sup>8</sup> *Vindic. Eccles. Hierarch.* per Franc. Hallier, ap. Taylor. xi. 231.

Connor, lauds his especial zeal in reviving the holy rite of Confirmation. Such seems to have been the conduct of Wilfrid: and crowds are described as seeking the chrism and imposition of hands from him, while the indefatigable bishop catechized them all with loving patience. Surely this was building up the living Church with invisible materials; and the winding ways of the blessed Saint's influence were more wonderful far than those of Hexham Abbey, which Eddi the precentor so much admired.

It was during one of his circuits through the country villages for the purpose of preaching and confirming, that God was pleased to set His seal to the sanctity of His servant Wilfrid by a visible miracle. In the village of Tiddafrey crowds pressed upon him to receive the unction of the holy chrism at his hands. During the rite a poor woman was seen forcing her way through the dense throng, with the demeanor of one in deepest trouble and vexation of spirit. She was bearing her child in her arms to be confirmed; the child's face was covered, says Matthew of Westminster, and the mother pretended she wished to have the boy catechized. But, in fact, the child was dead, and there was that within the mother's heart which told her that Wilfrid could raise him to life again. The bishop, uncovering the boy's face, perceived that he was dead; and he stood amazed and troubled at the sight, perhaps thinking the child had died recently, and without the mother being aware. But she, perceiving the bishop's hesitation, pressed upon him, and with her words interrupted by frequent sobs, she said, "See, my good lord, I had resolved to carry my boy to you to be confirmed in Christ, *and now I bring him, not to be confirmed only, but to be raised to life again.* You preach Christ the Almighty;

prove your preaching by your works, and raise my only begotten from death. Surely it is no great thing that I ask of His Omnipotence." Thus saying, she gave herself up to all the violence of grief, and the people lifted up their voices in lamentable concert with her. The bishop, too, began to weep, and to recite some psalms in a low voice, and then he prayed, "O Father, look, I beseech Thee, not at my merits, but at Thine own merciful doings, and console this woman in her grief, and give her back her child, through Jesus Christ Thine only-begotten Son." Then rising from his knees, he laid his right hand upon the child, who began to stir, and in a short time stood up in perfect health and strength. Wilfrid then gave him to his mother for seven years, claiming him for the service of God when that term was expired. The boy's name was Ethelwald; and when the seven years were over, his mother gave him up with an unwilling heart. He became a monk at Ripon, and ultimately died of the pestilence.

This was not the only miracle which the bishop wrought about this time. While Hexham Abbey was building, one of Wilfrid's favorite *cæmentarii* from Canterbury fell from a lofty scaffold. The bishop was not present, but knew in his spirit what had happened, and beginning to lament, desired those who were with him to intercede for the unhappy man, and all, straightway rising up in wonder, went to the place where the dead man lay. No sooner had Wilfrid touched the body, than life returned, and the limbs were restored sound and whole.

One of Wilfrid's chief cares, a natural one in a great church-builder, was to beautify the service of the sanctuary, and to provide that the functions of the Church should be performed with reverent splendor and magnificent solemnity. And this too is part of preaching,

surely no little part. What hope is there of people in whom the spirit of sacred timidity, of awe for unseen things, does not exist? It is not often that the heart is really at prayer when there is not a lowliness of corporal attitude. Without the help of our body and the admonition of its dejected postures, it is rare indeed to realize the Presence of God even in public worship. And then, too, what a consolation is it, in countries where the churches stand open well-nigh all the day, for the poor to leave their squalid dwellings, their bare, unfurnished, fireless room, and go to kneel amid the gold, and the lights, and the color, and the incense, and the gleaming altars and the vast naves, and the thrilling organs of the churches, where all is, so to speak, their own,—no pews, no jealous distinctions; such churches are obviously, what they really are inwardly, the homes of the poor,—not the poor, miserable, untruthful, weekly pageant, waiting on the rich to soothe consciences which want wounding, while the pauper, the lame, the blind, the deaf, are thrust far off till all who can pay for seats are satisfied, and close themselves up in comfortable division from the scaring sight of poverty, disease, and filth. The man who built the wonderful abbey at Hexham would naturally take pains with the performance of the public ritual of the Church. Yet his adorning was of a solemn sort. With the help of Eddi and Eona, he introduced the plain chant all over the north, till Yorkshire was full of poor peasants singing David's psalms in the grave sweetness of the Gregorian tones.

But Wilfrid felt that there were few parts of a bishop's office so important as a strict vigilance over the monastic orders. *Monastic orders are the very life's blood of a Church, monuments of true apostolic christianity, the*

refuges of spirituality in the worst times, the nurseries of heroic bishops, the mothers of rough-handed and great-hearted missionaries. A Church without monasteries is a body with its right arm paralyzed. All this Wilfrid knew full well, as well as we know it even with all our additional experience and melancholy convictions. So Dunstan felt, and so the blessed Ethelwold, both in their day, and so, far off from them, felt St. Alfonso, in his little Neapolitan diocese, and so Wilfrid felt, and took the matter strenuously in hand. He it was, as we have already seen, who introduced the Benedictine Rule into the northern shires of England; and that young man who left him at Lyons—we may remember how Eddi spoke of Paul and Barnabas—his name should never be disjoined from that of Wilfrid when this great work is mentioned; for St. Benedict Biscop can hardly be said to have carried on St. Wilfrid's work, but to have worked alongside of him, though apart. Providence seems to have raised them both up at once to do one and the same work all the more effectually, because they wrought independently. Indeed, there appears something like a law in this. There is rarely, if ever, any movement in the Church which is single; the movement seems to start from several points almost simultaneously. It is as though a spirit were resident in the whole body, greater far than the bent of an individual mind, or the contagious influences of party. The impulse is too general, or at least too extensive for such things to be an adequate account of it. The actuating spirit of the Church finds contemporary vents, sometimes close by each other, yet never coming into contact, or again, far off out of sight and hearing, yet with a uniform and consistent *expression of the same inward want, and harmoniously prophetic of the same coming change.* Perhaps

this may be, to such as will receive it, a sufficiently consoling token of a Divine Presence, and therefore a hidden support to those called upon to co-operate in any religious movement, through weariness and calumny, thwarting and apparent failure. As in Mercia, under Wulfere's government, Wilfrid had bestowed especial pains upon the monasteries, so did he now in his northern diocese. Yet Mercia was not forgotten. It was by his counsel, in 677, that St. Etheldreda rebuilt the abbey of St. Peter at Ely, for which her brother Aldulph, the king of the East Angles, supplied the funds. Indeed, Wilfrid's influence penetrated everywhere. Abbots and abbesses voluntarily surrendered the government of their monasteries to him, while princes and nobles delivered their sons to him to be educated under his eye ; and it is stated, that the pious parents took no umbrage at the result which so often happened—the youths declaring their determination to take the monastic habit, when their parents, at the proper age, proposed their entering the royal armies.

What a man of untiring energy Wilfrid must have been ! Yet, under all this pressure of external business, this many-sided care of the Churches, he sanctified himself with ascetic diligence. He knew full well that a life of practical activity, unless perpetually quickened by retirement and invigorated by that closeness to God which secret contemplation attains, becomes mere dissipation of spiritual strength, mere uneasy inconsistent benevolence, and degrades the self-denial of charity to our neighbour, into the mere half mental, half animal need of being busied about many things. He watched over his chastity as his main treasure, and was by an *unusual* grace preserved from pollution ; and to this end *he chiefly* mortified his thirst, and even in the heats of

summer and during his long pedestrian visitations, he drank only a little phial of liquid daily. So through the day he kept down evil thoughts, and when night came on, to tame nature and to intimidate the dark angels, no matter how cold the winter, he washed his body all over with holy-water, till this great austerity was forbidden him by Pope John. Thus, year after year, never desisting from his vigilance, did Wilfrid keep his virginity to the Lord. In vigil and in prayer, says Eddi the precentor, in reading and in fasting, who was ever like to him? Such was the private life of that busy bishop: so words sum up years, and cannot be realized unless they are dwelt upon, any more than that eternity by which they are repaid.

A bishop of York traversing his huge diocese on foot! Surely this in itself was preaching the Gospel. Fasting and footsore, shivering in the winter's cold, yet bathing himself in chilly water when he came to his resting-place at night; fainting beneath the sun of midsummer, yet almost grudging to himself the little phial of liquid; preaching in market-place, or on village green, or some central field amid a cluster of Saxon farms, behold the bishop of York move about those northern shires. He was not a peer of Parliament, he had no fine linen, no purple save at a Lenten mass, no glittering equipage, no liveried retainers: would it then be possible for those rude men of the north to respect him? Yes; in their rude way: they had faith, and haply they bowed more readily before him in that poor monkish guise than if he had played the palatine amongst them. Surely if we have half a heart we can put before our eyes as if it were a reality, Wilfrid on foot, Wilfrid preaching, Wilfrid *confirming*, Wilfrid sitting on a wrought stone *watching his cæmentarii*, as Dante sat upon his stone

and watched the superb duomo of Florence rise like an enchanted thing; Wilfrid listening to a new and awkward choir trying the Gregorian tones and keeping his patience even when Eddi and Eona lost theirs, Wilfrid marching at the head of his clergy up the new aisles of Ripon, Wilfrid receiving the confession of St. Etheldreda, and what was the fountain of all, Wilfrid kneeling with the pope's hands resting on his head and the archdeacon Boniface standing by. But we must think of another thing also,—Wilfrid riding, riding up and down his diocese : for this walking of Wilfrid's did not quite please St. Theodore ; not that it was too simple, but that it was too austere, and the life of such a man needed husbanding for the Church's sake. Would that St. Theodore had always thought so ! but he was a simple man as well as a wise one, and he too, strange that it should be so, mistook Wilfrid, knew not what he was, and so lost him for a while. However, at this time he thought nothing but what was true and good of Wilfrid, and he insisted—for he was archbishop of Canterbury—that his brother of York, who was but a bishop then, should have a horse to ride on during his longer journeys and more distant visitations. He knew this luxury pained Wilfrid ; so he made it up to him in the best way he could, for, to shew his veneration for the Saint, he insisted upon lifting him upon horseback whenever he was near him to do so. It would have been well for England if archbishops of Canterbury had always been of such a mind towards those who filled the throne of York. However, we now behold Wilfrid making his visitations on horseback ; for obedience is a greater thing to a Saint than even his much-loved *austerities*. Taking a hardship away from a Saint is *like depriving a mother of one of her children*, yet for

holy obedience sake, or the edification of a neighbour, a Saint will postpone even a hardship. Now, then, by the Ure and by the Nid, by the holly-spotted commons of the Wharf and the then pastoral margin of the Aire, by the rocky Tees, and the blue Ganlesse, and the gravelly Weare, in the valley of the two sweet Tynes, and by the border brooks that flow within sight of the towers of Coldingham, Wilfrid follows the sheeptracks on horseback, and so visits his beautiful diocese of York. A word here and a word there, a benediction and a prayer, the signed cross and the holy look, a confession heard, and a mass said, and a sermon preached, and that endless accompaniment of Gregorian tones ; verily the Gospel went out from him as he rode.

And was this fair heaven to be overcast ? Were these days to have an end ere death had come to force men to a compulsory contentment in the ending of all good things ?—for that death's law is universal, and cannot be evaded. Yes, it was even so : the nine years came to an end. The devil was not envious only ; he was dismayed also : for Wilfrid was obviously narrowing the bounds of his kingdom through the potent Cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord and God. There were abundant materials at hand for interrupting this fair Christian work in its hopeful progress.

It cannot be denied that the aspect of Church history is, on the first view of it, peculiarly discouraging ; and those who take but a superficial glance at it, may easily be led into that most immoral of all infidelities—a disbelief in the existence of human virtue and of high motives. For the great majority of holy plans which the Saints have projected, have come to nought before *half the harvest has been reaped* ; as though the best men, the choice specimens of our regenerate nature, had

not had sufficient continuity of impulse or generous perseverance to reach their own good ends. The fervor of Orders has been often but a fever, and decay has not even waited till the first founder was in his tomb before its melancholy manifestation began. Men see this ; it is painful to reflect twice upon it, and hence they have spoken of the blessed Saints in a style of disparaging apology, as of men not practical, or wise, or persevering, or consistent, but creatures of unregulated impulse, with now and then a grotesque heroism of their own. To others, again, it has appeared as though it was hopeless to try to do the world good, because in this world good has been a perpetual failure ; virtue among men has been but as a gathered flower in a hot hand, out of its place, fading during that short while in which it seems to live : and these teach a disheartening wisdom, a selfish mediocrity ; and they have so much truth on their side, that they deceive many. Virtue is but a gathered flower, and if we measure the good or ill success of it by our nearness to or remoteness from our self-appointed ends, truly good *has* been a constant failure : but, in sooth, our best, most tranquillizing knowledge is that we are blind-fold workers doing the Will of God. But there is another consolation which we may fairly take to ourselves, notwithstanding that it has something very awful about it. It is not only that good men fail in good things for want of wisdom and perseverance, or for lack of better materials to work upon than the mixed multitude of nominal believers ; but, as is obviously manifested in the case of St. Wilfrid, there is a third baffling, thwarting influence, which is no less than *the permitted agency of Satan*. By this, if it so please God, a man may be beaten, and yet be blameless : and *though it were a very unsafe thing to set up the cry of*

Satan wheresoever we hear of sin, even among the Saints, yet there are manifestations which cannot be mistaken ; and inasmuch as his agency is undeniable, a man must ever add it in his thoughts to the weakness of the Saints and the vileness of the multitude, when he reads Church history ; and it is not so enfeebling a thing to be afraid of malignant power, as to be disheartened by our own guilty infirmities. It does not appear that Satan found anything in Wilfrid's life out of which to weave his web ; but he found elsewhere an almost embarrassing abundance of materials.

Oswy died in 670, and at that time Alfrid, the eldest son (as some say) was in Ireland, and the succession to the Saxon thrones of those days was so precarious, that absence was enough to make a man miss his crown. Others say that Egfrid was really Oswy's eldest son, and that, though Alfrid had had the most influence during his father's lifetime, the people forced him to leave Egfrid in quiet possession of his hereditary right. Under any circumstances, Wilfrid's intimate connection with Alfrid would be rather an objection to him in the eyes of Egfrid, or might be made so by the dexterous insinuations of persons hostile to the bishop. Then again, as has been already intimated, Wilfrid's friendship with Wulfere, the Mercian king, and his kind of ecclesiastical alliance with the political enemies of the Northumbrian kingdom, were manifestly open to much and easy misrepresentation. Again, we are told that the deference paid to him by the abbots of remote monasteries, and the influence he was gaining among the nobles by educating their children, also created much envy and dislike. Besides, a holy man must needs have *many enemies* ; and Wilfrid was a bishop, and had *patronage to bestow*, and would certainly not b

stow it on unworthy candidates, whoever their supporters might be; and he had discipline to enforce, and he was the last man to calculate consequences when duty was clear. Food, therefore, there was for envy in almost unusual abundance, and it was artfully nourished, till it was too much for the peace or the power of Wilfrid.

But we must say a word on Oswy's death. He had taken a decided part in favor of the Roman usages at the Council of Whitby; it would appear that he afterwards returned to his former preference for the Scottish customs. It was, however, only for a while: when St. Theodore restored Wilfrid to his see, the king's reconciliation to him seems to have been hearty. As he grew older, and witnessed more and more the great work Wilfrid was doing, his reverence for Rome increased, and at length he became so affectionately desirous to visit that holy city, and be instructed there in the ways of Christian perfection, that he was preparing to lay aside his crown and go in pilgrimage to Rome, and die there amid the holy places. He chose Wilfrid as his conductor, and promised him a kingly donation as a recompense. Wilfrid hardly needed an inducement to take him to his beloved Rome; but those Canterbury cæmentarii of his afforded him opportunities of spending money, such as his princely heart delighted in. The vision of the many-steepled hills of Rome was, however, but momentary—a cloud-city in the sunset. Death came, and Oswy entered into the heavenly Jerusalem; better, unspeakably better, than terrestrial Rome. Yet Rome was not far off from Wilfrid; he was soon to enter its blessed gates, but in other *guise than that* of the honored conductor of a pilgrim king.

Meanwhile the building of Hexham Abbey was going on, and another accident was the occasion of a second miracle which Wilfrid wrought. As before he had restored to life one of the masons when quite dead, so now it was a young monk, with mangled limbs, and life still in him, who received his restoration from God through Wilfrid's sanctity. Indeed, he was but a boy, perhaps a novice only ; and he fell from a great height upon the stone pavement below. Both his legs and arms were fractured, and his whole body so bruised and broken, that he seemed at the point of death. The bishop appears, from the narrative, to have been a witness of the accident ; and bursting into tears, he desired the masons to lay the sufferer on a bier, and carry him out of the building. Then collecting the brethren round him, he made a sign that they should all pray that, as Eutychus had been given to the prayers of Paul, so their young brother should now be restored to their prayers. When the prayers were ended, Wilfrid blessed the boy, who seemed at the last gasp, and bade the leeches bind up the fractures in faith, and, contrary to all expectation, he recovered, but winning his strength gradually ;—a cure not the less miraculous for that it was gradual, and that human means were called in ; which may be observed in the case of some of our Blessed Lord's own miracles, the patterns of the wonders wrought by His Saints ; though, indeed, it must not be forgotten that He is ascended now, and that He said His followers in time to come should do greater works than those of His.

But while Wilfrid was working miracles and preaching, building churches and visiting his diocese, and under the pressure of all these apostolic labors, was *with great austerities* keeping his body under and

bringing it into subjection, lest he himself should be a castaway, the devil was conspiring against him, and envy making its work perfect. The chief occasion of Wilfrid's second troubles, was his connection with another of our famous English Saints, the blessed Etheldreda, "twice a widow, yet always a maid." What a freshness is there in the edifying history of those times when Saint intersected Saint as they moved in their appointed orbits ! Wonderful times to look back upon, very wonderful ; yet, when that Past was the Present, haply it did not seem so all unlike the Present now. Let us hope this for our own sakes, if only we be not lifted up too much by such a thought. Surely it is not a slight grace to be the children of those multitudinous stars which shone in our ancient Church in those days of her first espousals. May God be praised evermore for that He gave us our Saxon Saints.

Perhaps there are few Saints more intimately connected than Wilfrid was with the sacred history of his country,—of his times, we were going to say ; but it were sad to think *any* times should come when that history should not be equally instructive and equally interesting to the Christian dwellers on this island. It was mainly through Wilfrid's attestation that the Church came to know of the perpetual virginity of St. Etheldreda ;<sup>9</sup> and some little of her history must be related here, to clear up what is rather intricate in Wilfrid's life. St. Etheldreda was married to Egfrid in 660 or thereabouts, and desired to live with him a life

<sup>9</sup> It would appear from a passage in Camden that there was something miraculous about this : but really in these days one shrinks even from holy relations, lest men should find room for gibes and *impure sarcasms*, where our forefathers revered the beautiful majesty of *chasteness*.

of continence. The prince felt a scruple in denying this request ; but after some time had elapsed, seeing the reverence which St. Etheldreda had for Wilfrid, to whom she had given the land for his abbey at Hexham, Egfrid determined to use the bishop's influence in persuading the holy virgin to forego her purpose. He offered Wilfrid large presents in land and money, if he should succeed. How far Wilfrid dissembled with the king, or whether he dissembled at all, we cannot now ascertain : that he practised concealment is clear, and doubtless he thought it a duty in such a matter, and doubtless he was right : it would be presumptuous to apologize for his conduct ; he is a canonized Saint in the Catholic Church. Of course, it is not pretended that the lives of the Saints do not afford us warnings by their infirmities, as well as examples by their graces. Only, where a matter is doubtful, it would be surely an *awful* pride not to speak reverently of those whom the discernment of the Church has canonized. The way in which the Fathers treat of the failings of the blessed Patriarchs should be our model. However, the probable account of the matter, and the one which best unites the various narratives, is this : Wilfrid, at her husband's desire, did lay before St. Etheldreda what Egfrid required ; at the same time pointing out to her that obedience in such a matter was a clear duty, which nothing could supersede but a well-ascertained vocation from God. St. Etheldreda, it would appear, satisfied the bishop on this very point ; and then his duty was at once shifted. So far from urging her to comply with her husband's desires, he did all he could to strengthen her in her chaste resolve, and to render her *obedient to the heavenly calling*. Of course *we may anticipate* the sort of objections which would

be raised in these days to her conduct as a wife, and to her marrying Egfrid at all. But her defence belongs to her own life, not to Wilfrid's : our business here is simply a connected narrative of Wilfrid's share in the matter. In 671, through Wilfrid's influence, the king reluctantly gave way to Etheldreda's often expressed wish to retire into a monastery ; but from that moment his heart was changed towards Wilfrid. Soon after Egfrid repented of this consent, and sent to take her from the monastery of Coldingham, to which she had retired. By the advice of St. Ebba, the abbess, Etheldreda fled, and was preserved on a mountain by a very extraordinary miracle : and in 673 she founded her monastery at Ely, and received the benediction as abbess from Wilfrid himself. This was the great grievance which Egfrid had against Wilfrid ; and though he dissembled his hatred for the present, yet we are told by Thomas, the monk of Ely, and biographer of St. Etheldreda, that Wilfrid's ruin was now determined upon.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile king Egfrid married again ; for it would appear that a regular divorce had taken place between St. Etheldreda and himself. His new queen was a very different person from the blessed Etheldreda, and

<sup>1</sup> Father Cressy attacks the Magdeburg centuriators for mentioning St. Wilfrid's conduct about St. Etheldreda as being the main cause of his banishment, because, he says, no mention is made of it in the subsequent disputes. Doubtless the centuriators meant that it was the real though remote cause, as being the beginning of Egfrid's hatred : and this is surely true. But Cressy's accuracy cannot be depended upon : he assigns two different deaths to a king of the Mercians within a very few pages. The centuriators certainly tell St. Etheldreda's story in their own way ; but when they have done their best, one does not see what they have gained towards a justification of the sacrilegious concubinage of the infamous Luther.

her power to do mischief was not long in making itself felt. Ermenburga is described as being haughty and vindictive, and the stern, uncompromising Wilfrid came athwart both her evil passions. Through the piety of Oswy and his nobles, the churches throughout Wilfrid's immense diocese had been most richly provided with furniture for the altars, and vessels for the blessed Sacrifice. Many were of gold, none of a viler metal than silver, and copes, and chasubles, and maniples, were embroidered in the most costly way. Now, meanness generally lies alongside of haughtiness, and so Ermenburga began to cast a covetous eye upon these treasures of the sanctuary. When she saw how the good bishop was courted by high and low, how the nobles sought to him for counsel, how a court of abbots did obeisance to him, how the sons of princes and peers stood round him proud to serve in such a service, Ermenburga's pride was inflamed beyond measure. There was more of kingly seeming gathered round that mitred ascetic at Ripon, than round her royal husband, wherever his court might be. Was anything more wanted to deepen her hatred for the holy man? A keener grief, if it were possible, was yet to be added to her covetousness and pride. Her deportment was not such as became a queen, and Wilfrid told her so. He rebuked her for her levity, and Wilfrid's rebukes were not likely to be less severe and plain than is called for by wickedness in high places. The indignant queen could now hardly contain herself, and going into Egfrid's presence she taunted him with being but the second man in his kingdom. "Look at his riches," said she; "look at his retainers of high birth, his *gorgeous vestments*, his jewelled plate, his multitude of *obedient monasteries*, the towers and spires and swell-

ing roofs of all his stately buildings; why, your kingdom is but his bishopric." Ermenburga was like the world: to the world's eye this was what a churchman looked like in Catholic ages: yet the world's eye sees untruly. The gorgeous vestments, the jewelled plate—these are in the Church of God, the sanctuary of the pious poor: outside of that is the hair-shirt, and then the iron girdles, and the secret spikes corroding the flesh, and the long weals of the heavy discipline, and the horny knees, and the craving thirst, and the gnawing hunger, and the stone pillow, and the cold vigil. Yet does the world exaggerate the Churchman's power? Nay, it cannot take half its altitude; his power is immeasurably greater: but it does not reside, not a whit of it, in the vestments or the plate, in the lordly ministers or the monkish chivalry, but in the mystery of all that apparel of mortification just enumerated, that broken will and poverty of spirit to which earth is given as a present possession, no less than Heaven pledged as a future heritage. The Church is a kingdom, and ascetics are veritable kings.

But the devil gives wisdom to his servants, wisdom of his own kind. Egfrid and Ermenburga did not attempt alone the dangerous and invidious task of expelling the Saint from his diocese. They went to work with deepest sagacity. In 673, St. Theodore held a synod at Thetford;<sup>2</sup> Wilfrid attended only by his proxies, and it has been conjectured<sup>3</sup> that his reason for not attending, was his suspicion that the archbishop would attempt to carry some decree to his prejudice. Now St. Theodore had set his heart upon dividing the

<sup>2</sup> Hertford, some say.

<sup>3</sup> By Mr. Peck. Hist. of Stamford, Book ii. p. 26.

great English sees, and multiplying the number of bishops. A very good object it was, yet the holy man shewed some little want of faith, and, alas ! a very great want of justice, in the manner of carrying out his plan. In fact, we may as well say at once, that, turn the history which way we will, we cannot make out even a shadow of an apology for St. Theodore, except what is, after all, the best apology, his subsequent undisguised repentance and earnest seeking for reconciliation with Wilfrid. Of the ten chapters or decrees of the Synod of Thetford, we need make no mention, except of the ninth, which, in St. Theodore's own words, ran thus,—That as the faithful increase, more bishops be made; *but on this article, for the present we concluded nothing.* It is clear, therefore, that the Synod of Thetford gave the primate no power to divide sees ; and if St. Theodore conceived that his legatine authority enabled him to do this, then it was surely something like an unworthy subterfuge to bring the matter into discussion at all at Thetford. And, moreover, the Holy See would be most unlikely, from its known moderation and reverence for the ancient canons, to permit the division of bishoprics, and the intrusion of new bishops against the will of the existing prelates. Under any circumstances, Theodore could not divide Wilfrid's diocese *canonically*, except with Wilfrid's assent, which he did not even ask.

But Egfrid knew how strongly the archbishop of Canterbury felt upon this subject. Soon after the Synod of Thetford, Bisi, the bishop of the East Angles, had become hopelessly infirm ; and Theodore, instead of consecrating one coadjutor, appointed two, dividing the *old diocese* into the two new ones of Dunwich and *North Elmham*. The Northumbrian king, therefore,

under pretext of zeal for the Church, represented to St. Theodore, that the diocese of York was too unwieldy to be adequately governed by one bishop, and at the same time so rich that it could easily support three. Together with this representation, Egfrid sent grievous complaints of Wilfrid's pride, tyranny, and luxury, and (though we are ashamed to add what truth requires) promised ample gifts to the archbishop if he would depose Wilfrid. Theodore, as he journeyed to England, had spent some time with bishop Agilbert at Paris, and had asked of him information and advice respecting the English Church : Agilbert was the consecrator of Wilfrid, had ordained him priest, and made him spokesman at the Council of Whitby ; surely what he said of Wilfrid might have given Theodore great confidence in the man of God. Theodore had deposed St. Chad on Wilfrid's behalf, and he had interfered with Wilfrid's austerities with an affectionate peremptoriness, and made him ride on horseback, and taken a meek pride in lifting the bishop of York upon his horse : would he not require uncommon proof of Wilfrid's pride and luxury and tyranny ? Alas, for St. Theodore ! Like many other men, he had ascertained to himself the goodness and the greatness of a favorite end, the division of the bishoprics ; he had some reason to know that Wilfrid would object to the parcelling out of his hard-won diocese of York, and so—he fell. It was not the presents which tempted him ; no, Theodore's whole life will never allow such an accusation to be credible ; it was his impatience to carry out his favorite scheme of Church reform, which drew the holy primate into Egfrid's base and cunning snare.

*Perhaps it is only just to St. Theodore to state his plan of reform, and shew how needful it was ; and this*

we cannot do better than by borrowing the words of a modern historian :<sup>4</sup>

“The extensive authority which pope St. Gregory conferred on Augustine appears to have been personal : it was not exercised, perhaps not claimed, by his immediate successors. But when, in 654, pope Vitalian elevated Theodore of Cilicia to the dignity vacant by the death of Deusdedit, the sixth archbishop, the same jurisdiction was revived in favour of the new primate. Theodore was a man of severe morals, and of great learning ; but the consideration which, above all, led to his choice, was his extensive acquaintance with the canons, and his unbending firmness. By all the Saxon prelates, he was recognized as the head of the English Church. But after his death, and under his immediate successors, some of these prelates aspired to independence. The first was Egbert of York, brother to the king of Northumbria, who appealed to the Pope for the restoration of the archiepiscopal honours of his see, — honours which, as we have before intimated, were reserved to it by the decree of St. Gregory the Great. The disasters of which Northumbria had been the theatre by the frequent invasions of the Pagans, and the partial apostacy of the province, had doubtless forfeited the metropolitan character of York ; we may add, that it could have had no suffragans beyond the fleeting prelates of Hexham, and the remote ones of Lindisfarne. But now that tranquillity was for a season restored, and that there appeared an opening for the erection of new sees, a papal decree severed from the immediate jurisdiction of Canterbury all the sees that existed, or might hereafter exist, north of the Humber. This was a

<sup>4</sup> Dunham, iii. 305.

triumph to the Northumbrian king, who could not have beheld with much complacency the subordination of his bishops to the subjects of the kings of Kent. The same jealousy seized on Offa, king, of Mercia, who felt that he was more powerful than either of his brother sovereigns, and who declared that his kingdom was as deserving of a metropolitan as either Northumbria or Kent. His application, too, was successful, and Lichfield was acknowledged as a spiritual metropolis by the bishops of Mercia and East Anglia. We are not told what motives induced Kenulf, the successor of Offa, to restore to the cathedral of Canterbury its jurisdiction over the central provinces of England; but after a short opposition on the part of Leo, the reigning pontiff, the metropolitan of Lichfield descended to the rank of a suffragan bishop; and from that period the precedency of the Kentish see has been firmly established. Originally the Saxon dioceses were of enormous extent, nearly commensurate with the kingdoms of the heptarchy:—thus that of Winchester embraced the kingdom of the West Saxons, extending from the confines of Kent to those of British Cornwall. Mercia, extensive and populous as it was, had but one bishop; but greater than all was the jurisdiction of the Northumbrian prelate, who, from his cathedral of Lindisfarne or York, presided over all the Christian congregations of the Saxons and Picts, from the Humber to the Forth and the Clyde. To suppose that any individual could be equal to the government of districts so vast, is absurd; yet no serious attempts were made to remedy the evil, until Theodore was invested with the primacy. The first step of that able man was to divide *Mercia* into five sees,—Lichfield, Leicester, Hereford, Worcester, and Synacester. The deposition of St.

Wilfrid enabled him to divide Northumbria into the dioceses of York, Lindisfarne, Hexham, and Withern. His conduct was imitated by his successor; so that within a few years after his death, seventeen bishops possessed the spiritual jurisdiction of England. Wales had its own prelates: Carlisle had also one of British race, independent of the Saxon metropolitans. Subsequently there were some variations both in the number and the seat of these sees: thus Lindisfarne was transferred to Chester-le-Street; and on the death of Tidferth, the last bishop of Hexham, that see was incorporated with Chester-le-Street, and the metropolis was subsequently transferred to Durham. But Northumbria had never its due number of prelates. This evil was felt by the venerable Bede, who asserts that many districts had never seen their diocesan, and that thousands of Christians had never received the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands. He earnestly recommended the adoption of pope St. Gregory's plan,—that Northumbria should be divided into twelve dioceses, dependent on the metropolis of York; but no steps were seriously taken to forward the views of pope or monk."

But if St. Theodore urged his favorite scheme with hardly justifiable zeal, is not Wilfrid blameworthy likewise for not at once acceding to the division? It might have been a great humiliation to him as giving a seeming victory to the haughty queen, yet it would have enabled him to maintain a position of usefulness in his native land, and if it was for the good of the Church, should he not have given way? Is not his resistance just like the rebellious arrogance of Dunstan, Anselm, or Becket?—Certainly: such rebellious arrogance as there *was about those three* wonderful, most honored Saints *was there likewise* about St. Wilfrid: his character

is in many respects singularly like that of the blessed St. Thomas à Becket. But Wilfrid knew more than Theodore : he knew, what actually took place in the event, that a royal scheme of Church spoliation<sup>5</sup> was connected with the proposed division of the bishopric. Yet even if it had not been so, we should remember how hardly and by steps St. Wilfrid had won that huge diocese to Christ, and had brought it into happy subjection to catholic traditions and St. Peter's Chair ; and there is a singular faculty given like a new sense to honest and hard-working priests ; it is the love of souls : and perhaps none but a Saint could adequately measure the affliction which a teacher would suffer in having his spiritual children taken from his guidance and paternal care. The convents and their dependent villages all up the valleys of those wooded streams of the romantic north—they were Wilfrid's creation. There he went preaching and confirming, and receiving confessions till he loved his spiritual sons and daughters as not one mother in Bethlehem loved her helpless innocents. The accumulated affections—the thousand peasant biographies half known or wholly, by confession or otherwise,—the local ties,—the remembered difficulties of a new foundation or a recent parish—the miracle vouchsafed through him—the answered prayer—the angel-visited Mass—the guiding dream in one place, the spiritual rapture in another—who shall tell the sum of these things ? Flesh and blood have no such ties as that betwixt priest and people. Yet do we confess our-

<sup>5</sup> One of the causes of Egfrid's dislike of Wilfrid was the bishop's undaunted opposition to Egfrid's determination forcibly to take away *an estate* which he had himself formally given to the Church of York. *After all, most kings have somewhat of Henry the Eighth's temper in them.*

selves unable to appreciate all this and think it an unreal poetry? Shame then on our soft-living priests! Were they by the dying bed, or teaching the shepherd boy, or reclaiming the impure youth, or in patient weariness opening the mind of stupid age, were they happy in the life of self-inflicted poverty so as to be bounteous to the poor, were they lowly in attire, and not absorbed amid the gentle-folk, were they the full seven times a-day in prayer, with constant services and frequent Sacrifices in their old English churches,—were they all these things rather than such things as they often are, we too should be other than we are, and we should be as willing to praise Wilfrid for clinging to his diocese, as we should be unwilling to leave a flock whom we have loved and for whom we have labored, to go to greater wealth and higher dignities. O when will God give us hearts to live such lives that we may come to understand his Saints?

There is some little difficulty in the history which follows. It seems admitted by all that St. Theodore divided Wilfrid's diocese without consulting him either as to the measure itself or as to the persons intruded upon his flock. But some maintain<sup>6</sup> that the diocese of Lindisfarne, with Hexham severed from it, was left to Wilfrid; and this would make Theodore's conduct somewhat less violent and strange; while others make Hexham and Lindisfarne to have been one diocese conferred on Eata,—and this is more consonant with St. Bede's narrative. But the venerable historian often omits intermediate steps, and it seems more probable that Theodore divided the diocese into four bishoprics, giving York to Bosa, Hexham to Eata, Lindisfarne to Wilfrid, and then

<sup>6</sup> *With Wharton, Angl. Sac. i. 693.*

Lincolnshire, newly conquered from the Mercians, to Eadhed, whose throne was fixed at Sidnacheater, a city passed away, probably from some incommodity in the site, a thing not frequent in the almost inspired choice which the old founders of cities generally made; for, from certain modern attempts, we might almost suppose, either that men were guided in this matter because of its immense moral as well as physical importance to subsequent ages, or that the choice of sites was a peculiar talent, which has become almost extinct from want of use. The choice of sites in America, for instance, does not seem, by all accounts, to have been made with the mysterious felicity which marked the settlement of the old European cities. However, Sidnacheater is gone, and Gainsborough is come into its place, and it is probable the new town is not many miles removed from the site of the old city.

Supposing this to be the true account of the matter, Theodore's conduct was plainly uncanonical, inasmuch as Wilfrid was never consulted, and if the archbishop acted thus on the strength of his legatine jurisdiction, it was unwarrantable, as being uncongenial with the spirit of the court of Rome, and, as the event proved, sure to be discountenanced there. Moreover, there was a peculiar harshness, all things considered, in giving York to Bosa, and sending Wilfrid to the old see of Lindisfarne, the revival of York's episcopal honor being part of Wilfrid's system, of his romanizing movement. We can understand modern writers blaming Wilfrid for having brought the Church of his country more and more into subjection to Rome. Certainly, it is true *that he materially aided the blessed work of riveting more tightly the happy chains which held England to St. Peter's chair,—chains never snapped, as sad ex-*

perience tells us, without the loss of many precious Christian things. Wilfrid did betray, to use modern language, the liberty of the national Church: that is, translated into catholic phraseology, he rescued England, even in the seventh century, from the wretched and debasing formality of nationalism. Such charges, however ungraceful in themselves, and perhaps downright heretical, are, at least, intelligible in the mouths of Protestant historians; but it is obvious that Theodore could have no objection to Wilfrid on the score of his romanizing, for the holy archbishop was himself the very presence of great Rome in this island of ours. So that it really was almost a piece of inventive cruelty, of gratuitous harshness, to send Wilfrid to Lindisfarne, and install Bosa in the cathedral of St. Paulinus, with Wilfrid's roof, and Wilfrid's windows, and the beautiful columns which Wilfrid purged of the damp green moss.

Wilfrid's first step, when he was officially informed of this arbitrary act, was to consult the neighbouring bishops, who seem to have advised resistance. Accordingly, he appeared before the king in council,<sup>7</sup> and complaining of the wrong, he quoted the canons of the Church, which forbade all such changes until the bishop of the diocese should have publicly defended the rights of his see; and he laid, as he was likely to do, especial stress on the fact, that kings could not, without sin, take ecclesiastical authority upon themselves at all. Further, he desired that any accusations against himself personally might be brought forward, that he might confront his accusers and establish his own in-

<sup>7</sup> *Mr. Smith makes the archbishop present, which is most unlikely from what happened.*

nocence. The answer of the king and his council was, that they had nothing to lay to his charge, but that they were determined to carry into effect what had been decreed about his diocese. Nothing was further from St. Theodore's thoughts; yet, out of excessive love for his own project, he had swerved from the canons, and the consequence had been, not only much individual suffering and injury, but the opening the flood-gates of erastianism upon the Northumbrian Church, and giving a seemingly legal countenance to an extensive sacrilege in the robbery of vestments, plate, and other church property. Where an institution is divine, as is the case with the Holy Church, no one knows how much is tied to little things: in religion, especially, mischief is not to be measured by its beginnings.

It was now plain to Wilfrid, that his cause was to have no fair hearing in England; and his course was determined upon instantly. The council had openly declared that they had no personal charge to bring against him: from that moment Wilfrid the *man* was put out of sight; the Church was wronged in him, her ancient canons violated, her majesty insulted, her divine rights usurped by a layman who happened to have a crown upon his head; it was Wilfrid the *bishop* who had now to act; and from that moment most wonderful, most refreshing, most worthy of reverential honor and love, is the conduct of the blessed Saint! All personal feeling, all anger, all vindictiveness, all pusillanimity whatsoever, is absolutely put away. He journeys abroad: is he brooding over his wrongs? no—his spirit is painfully moved by the idolatry around him: is he impatiently pressing on to Rome? no—he has forgotten himself, and is loitering among the *Frisons*, teaching them the Gospel: he stands before

the Roman court ; is he urging the injustice of St. Theodore ? no—quite the contrary ; speaking honorably of him, begging his own personal wishes may not be consulted, desiring St. Peter's successor to legislate for the Church as he thought best, and he, Wilfrid, was ready,—nay, eager to obey. Never did the grace of God so shine forth in the great Wilfrid, as when he was wandering an exile from his own beloved toil-won diocese. Raising the dead was a miracle far short of the wonders of his meek-spirited contentment.

Turning, therefore, to the king, the high-minded prelate, never forgetting due respect, said, “I see that your Majesty has been wrought upon, to my prejudice, by certain factious and malignant persons about you. I appeal, therefore, to the Apostolic See.” O blessed See of Rome ! was never charm spoken over the tossings of a troubled world like that potent name of thine ! What storms has it not allayed ! What gathering evils has it not dissipated, what consummated evils has it not punished and undone, what slaveries has it not ended, what tyrannies, local or world-wide, has it not broken down, what smooth highways has it not made for the poor and the oppressed, even through the thrones of kings, and the rights of nobles, and the treasure-chambers of narrow-hearted commonwealths ! Rome's name spoken by the widow or the orphan, or the unjustly divorced wife, or the tortured serf, or the persecuted monk, or the weak bishop, or the timid virgin,—have there not been ages when emperors and kings, and knights and peers, trembled to hear it in their far-off strongholds ? All things in the world have promised *more than they have done*, save only the little, *soon-spoken name* of Rome, and it has ever gone be-

yond its promise in the mightiness of its deeds ; and is not then that word from God ?

The court of Egfrid scorned the name of Rome : but the scorn was not for long. When Wilfrid mentioned Rome, the courtiers burst into open laughter and loud derision. Wilfrid heard the jeers, and felt them. He was a great man, for he never mentioned them at Rome ; he left his cause to itself, and sought not to excite feeling where fact was enough. He heard the gibes of the boorish peers of that Saxon princeling ; and he spoke one sad sentence more, and then left the hall, "Unhappy men ! you laugh now to see the Churches ruined ; but on this very day next year you shall bewail your own ruin." A mournful prophecy was vengeance enough for him, and for the majesty of Rome.

Beautiful was the sunrise on the autumnal woods in the valley of the Tyne, for the month of August was past or just passing, and the leaden roofs of Hexham Abbey glanced brightly amid the partially discolored boughs ; and bright, too, were the silver breakers on the shallow shore of Lindisfarne : but within were mourning, and dismay, and sinking hearts, and wild projects, and then a silent helpless sitting-still in sorrow, when the news was told that Wilfrid was an exile, that the diocese of York was broken up, that strangers were coming to rule the children of the man of God. Perhaps—alas that it should be so !—there was joy in one holy house, St. Hilda's home, on the promontory of Whitby, for vehement, indeed, was her dislike of Wilfrid. St. Hilda was a saintly virgin, but she could not understand Wilfrid ; he towered up out of her *sight*, and she had the strangest possible notions of *him*. There were misgivings all over England when

the news was heard ; for there were many, even among the bishops, who did not side with Theodore ; indeed, it was by the advice of his brother bishops that Wilfrid had appealed to Rome. Meanwhile, the exile turned his back upon the Ure and the Nid, and sought the frontiers of the Mercian kingdom, and doubtless he passed by his old home at Stamford, that first Benedictine foundation of his, for he found king Ethelred at Peterborough, or Medehamstead, as it was then called. His visit there was brief, and he carried thence a commission from Ethelred to the pope, to request that he would confirm the liberties, privileges, and immunities of the new abbey. From the top of Peterborough minster, looking over Whittlesea Mere, the quick eye may light on the octagonal tower of Ely ; the miserable region of fen which lies between the two cities St. Wilfrid now traversed, and entering the abbey of Ely, which had been his landmark far off, though the octagon was not built till the fourteenth century, he doubtless received a true Christian greeting from the abbess Etheldreda. The examination of the new buildings, begun at his suggestion, would be deeply interesting to Wilfrid ; and he was a man of that elastic temperament, that he could throw off the load of his own griefs almost without an effort.

His stay in England was very brief, and he journeyed onward to the sea. What a hopeless journey it seemed ; surely it needed a high, hopeful heart to bear him through. Alone, or with one or two of his clergy,<sup>8</sup> he was travelling to Rome, to charge an archbishop and a king, whose messengers would be there with

<sup>8</sup> It appears that Eddi Stephani and Tatbert at least were with him ; and as he left some monks in Friesland, probably they too accompanied him from the north.

their tale also. It was to be a single-handed fight ; where were his patrons, his proofs, his witnesses ? the primate, too, a chosen man, and sent from Rome ! But Wilfrid knew that Rome was not like other places, so he took heart and went on ; and as to evidence, to Wilfrid a canon of the Church was all in all, and canons were thought scarcely less of at Rome, and Wilfrid knew that likewise ; and let the world do what it would to him, one thing it could not make him—a dejected man ! When Wilfrid approached the shores of England years ago, the elements had seemed to predict his troubles : now he encountered a rough west wind, and that wind had a solemn commission from on High. It saved Wilfrid's life, and carried the Gospel to the Frisons. Ermenburga and his English enemies took for granted that Wilfrid would land at the usual French port, which was Quentavic, now St. Josse-sur-Mer in Ponthieu, and so follow the direct road to Rome. Aware of the badness of their cause, they sent letters and presents to the tyrant Ebroin, begging him to spoil Wilfrid, and, if possible, to slay him. But their request had a different effect from what they anticipated. The west wind saved Wilfrid, but in the ensuing year Winfrid, St. Chad's successor at Lichfield, was driven into exile, some say because he would not fall in with a scheme which St. Theodore had for dividing his diocese, and others because he had taken the side of king Egfrid, with whom Ethelred was at war, and, therefore, when the latter became conqueror, he expelled the bishop. However, Winfrid sounded too like Wilfrid : the unlucky bishop of Lichfield landed at St. Josse-sur-Mer, fell into the hands of Ebroin's agents, and was robbed of all that he possessed ; so that Egfrid's snare caught one of his own friends in-

stead of his enemy. Meanwhile, early in the autumn, Wilfrid landed safely among the Frisons, the beginner, as it were, of those wonderful missions, which rendered the English name so justly dear to the old Germanic Churches.

Thierry III., sometimes called Theodoric, sometimes Theuderic, has suffered the same injustice at the hands of historians as befell St. Bathildis. As that holy queen has been charged with the murder of St. Delphinus of Lyons, so has Thierry borne the character of being Wilfrid's base persecutor.<sup>9</sup> The inaccuracy has arisen from not distinguishing between the mayors of the palace, the real rulers of the country, and the names of those Merovingian faineants under whom they ruled. In order to clear up St. Wilfrid's journey, it will be necessary to go a little into the French history of those early times. The Merovingians, the house of Clovis, ruled France for about two hundred and fifty years: they were a sterile race, and scarcely gave out one great man, and but a few good men, in the long interval between Clovis and Charles Martel. The characteristic of their rule was this,—perpetual imbecile war; the empire of Clovis was divided into Austrasia and Neustria; the people of the former spoke German, and were Germans in character and way of life; while the inhabitants of Neustria were romanized Gauls, more advanced than

<sup>9</sup> It is not meant to do more here than common historical justice to Thierry. He was a sluggish, pleasure-loving king, and of course it was a grievous sin in one so exalted to delegate his power to another. Yet one is anxious to say what good one can, or remove evil accusations, when a man has become a penitent at last, as Thierry did. The exile of St. Amé seems to have weighed the most heavy on *Thierry's conscience*, if we may judge from his donations to the abbey of Breuil. See the lives of St. Amatus.

the Austrasians in the effeminacies of civilization, and therefore behind them in martial intrepidity. The stupidity and sluggishness of the Merovingian sovereigns were such, that in a short time they were but names. The bold, often low-born, adventurers who filled the office of mayors of the palace were the real governors of the country. A little enquiry into the facts of the two cases, an enquiry which need not be made here, will shew that St. Bathildis and Thierry III. have not to answer for the murder of St. Delphinus or the persecution of St. Wilfrid. The really guilty person was the renowned Ebroin, whose course we shall briefly sketch. When Sigebert III., king of Austrasia, died, he left his throne to his son, Dagobert II. Grimoald, the mayor, tired of the somewhat clumsy farce of governing under another name, forced the tonsure upon Dagobert, and sent him to a monastery in Ireland. A counter-revolution followed, in which the Austrasian nobles put Grimoald and his sons to death ; yet Dagobert was not recalled, but the empire parcelled out into three kingdoms, for three infant princes, children of Clovis II. Neustria fell to Clothaire III., Austrasia to Childeric II., and Burgundy to Thierry III. In 670, eight years before Wilfrid's exile, Clothaire died, and Neustria was added to the dominions of Thierry. Ebroin was his mayor, an insolent and ferocious man, whom the nobles feared and hated. A revolution took place. In 659 Clothaire and St. Bathildis had called St. Leger from his abbey in Poitou, and had made him Bishop of Autun, and prime minister ; at the death of Clothaire, St. Leger defended Childeric against Thierry, as the rightful heir ; but, as we have seen, Ebroin carried the day. The revolution which followed appears to have been mainly *the work of St. Leger*. Childeric was acknowledged

king of Neustria, and Ebroin's life was only saved by St. Leger's intercession. The mayor was tonsured, and put into St. Columban's abbey of Luxeuil, and Thierry into the abbey of St. Denys. So long as Childeric followed St. Leger's advice he reigned happily ; but, falling into a dissolute manner of living, and ill brooking the stern admonitions of the bishop, he confined St. Leger also at Luxeuil with Ebroin, who there reconciled himself with the bishop. In 673 another revolution followed, and Childeric was slain, St. Leger restored to his diocese, and Dagobert II. recalled from his monastery in Ireland. Ebroin likewise escaped from the cloisters of Luxeuil at the same time, and, finding that his post was filled up by Leudesius, he murdered him, and then set up a pretended son of Clovis for king. He invaded Burgundy, and first attacked Autun. The romantic siege, the pious heroism of St. Leger, would lead us from our present purpose. Enough that Ebroin conquered ; that he tore out St. Leger's eyes, though he owed his life to him ; that he ordered him to be left in a thick wood to starve, where he was saved by the pity of Vaimer ; then St. Leger was dragged through a marsh, and over a stony road, till the soles of his feet were cut in pieces. Ebroin then split his tongue, and cut his lips off, and finally had his head cut off in the forest of Iveline, since called St. Leger's wood. Ebroin, making himself master of the person of Thierry, was restored to his post as mayor of the palace, and reigned till he was assassinated by one of his own creatures, a merited end to a life of such manifold atrocities. Thus, at the period of Wilfrid's journey, Thierry III. was nominal king of Neustria and Burgundy, and Ebroin the real governor, who sought *the Saint's life* ; whereas Austrasia was ruled by Dagobert II., the Irish monk, who had been Wilfrid's guest

in England.<sup>1</sup> Alas ! what awful materials for the Last Judgment does this single page of French history exhibit ! Surely there is something depressing in the study of secular history, which sends us for relief to the lives of the Saints, the marvellous power of grace Divine, the heavenly chapter of the world's chronicle, the one bright aspect of the melancholy past.

Wilfrid, then, by the providence of God, was driven on the Frison shore, and unexpectedly beheld a new field of apostolic labors opened before him. It was yet early in the autumn, and it would have been easy for him to have prosecuted his journey toward Rome ; but his spirit was stirred up by the idolatry around him ; and the hospitable reception he met with from Adgils, the pagan king of the country, would increase his desire to bring him and his people to the knowledge of the Gospel. Labor was almost a luxury to Wilfrid ; he could not sit still for ever so short a while. Some Saints there have been who have served God in hermitages, contemplating the Divine love, and in ascetic silence, or in the desert, not responsive to their vocal praise, have offered such poor homage as they might to the adorable perfections of the Ever-blessed Undivided Trinity ; others there have been, restless men, strong-handed and stout-hearted, who cope with difficulties, war upon the world with a seeming wantonness, and whose energy seems

<sup>1</sup> Alford, and Cressy after him, make Thierry, not Dagobert, to have been Wilfrid's guest, and to have been exiled into Ireland. The only proof they bring is that Thierry was king of the Franks at this time ; they do not seem to know of the partition of the country. Cressy says that Dagobert was dead before this. He is thinking of Dagobert I. who died in 638 ; Dagobert II. was not assassinated till after Wilfrid's journey, about 680, a little before Ebroin, who undertook to revenge his death.

like a habit, not spent by age, but reinforced by use ; and these reform Churches, and exorcise the evil spirits from pagan nations, and strangle high-minded heresies, and break in pieces civil powers when they have become, through vastness or corruption, nuisances to the world. Wilfrid was one of this latter class. He loved the Frisians for their free hospitality ; his spirit rose as he stood in the manifest presence of the Evil One misleading those poor heathen to their ruin ; so he put off his griefs as a pilgrim unbuckles his wallet, and he girded himself up gallantly to the rough work of a missionary. Whoever saw that active Englishman flying, rather than travelling, up and down the Frison tribes, arguing with pagan priests as undauntedly as he would have preached in Hexham Abbey, rebuking the rude nobles for their wassail or their lust with as calm an assumption of power as if he were imposing a penance in chapter at Ripon, preaching in the fields, catechising in the villages, baptizing multitudes in the rivers of the country, eating and sleeping one could scarcely tell when or where,—whoever saw him would have supposed him to be a man who had nothing else to think of but his Frison converts, no cares, no ties, no duties, beyond what were to be seen, and a wonder it might be how he even got through those in the masculine way he did. Yet he was an exiled bishop, he had an intricate cause to plead at Rome, and he was to get thither through the daggers of assassins as best he could. All this was nothing to Wilfrid ; God gave him no rest, the Saint sought it not, loved it not ; rest did not suit him ; peace is out of place here, for if we have too much of it now, we have less of it hereafter. And are we not taught at Nones on a Confessor's feast, *Honestavit illum in laboribus, et complevit labores illius ?*

If it had pleased God—there is no record that it did so—to give Wilfrid the fore-knowledge so often imparted to the Saints, and indeed imparted to Wilfrid himself when he prophesied prince Elfwin's death, the spirit of the bishop might have been supported by seeing the destined triumph of the Gospel in those parts through the apostolic labors of English missionaries. It is not our place to tell of Willebrord, and Boniface, and Werenfrid, and all the galaxy of Saints who were the companions and coadjutors of Boniface. St. Eligius of Noyon had been in Friesland even before Wilfrid, and the seed that Wilfrid sowed sprang up indeed, and doubtless souls were saved, and the first fruits of the Frisons gathered into heaven. Yet his work seemed to pass away ; the nation was not thoroughly evangelized ; indeed how could it be in his short stay ? But Wilfrid was connected with the future conversion also of the brave and hospitable Frisons. In 665, the year after his consecration at Compiègne, there came to Ripon a Northumbrian, named Wilgis, and his wife was with him. Wilgis was a holy man, and when left a widower, became a monk, and finally a hermit. But now the pious pair had brought to the abbey gate a child seven years old, and committed him to Wilfrid's keeping, and Wilfrid had left him at Ripon a goodly young monk, now twenty years of age. The young monk was Willebrord, the great apostle of Friesland : how far were his labors owing to what he learned of Wilfrid ? It was in the same year of Wilfrid's exile, probably in consequence of his departure, that Willebrord left Ripon, and going over to Ireland, joined St. Egbert, of whom we have already spoken. Thus there is scarcely a page of holy *history* in those times without Wilfrid's name appearing *in it*. He had put himself at the head of a daring

movement, and it was likely therefore that his influence would be felt everywhere. Christmas came ; how dreary were the mouths of the Rhine, and the wild flats around in that bleak season ; yet there was less bleakness that winter among the Frisons than there ever had been heretofore, since they came across the Rhine and turned the warlike Catti out of those swampy seats of theirs. There was less bleakness that year, for round many a hearth were Christians keeping Christmas—a new thing in the land, a new word in the Frison tongue.

But the evil spirits which the man of God cast out of the Frisons entered into the heart of Ermenburga, and quickened her envy and her hatred. At her instigation and for her promised bribes Ebroin, who in that very year, perhaps in October, had slain St. Leger, determined to compass Wilfrid's destruction. Probably he knew not how that holy man had once been within his power ; that he, the potent prelate who was even in exile disquieting kings and queens, was the same young Englishman who stood stripped for execution at the martyrdom of St. Delphinus. Things take strange turns : but Wilfrid was preserved a second time. Ebroin sent a letter to king Adgils, promising with an oath to give him a bushelful of gold pieces, if he would send him Wilfrid, alive or dead. When the letter came, it was winter, and Adgils was giving a lordly feast in his palace. Wilfrid was there, and so was Eddi Stephani, the precentor. The king desired the letter to be read in the hearing of all. The contents were startling ; Eddi Stephani might fear, though we know not that he did ; Wilfrid, on whom all eyes were fixed, lifted up his soul to God and was calm, as calm as strenuous men *always are when calmness is courage*. When the letter *was finished*, the king desired to have it put into his

hands ; no sooner had he received it than the indignant barbarian tore it in pieces, and threw it on the blazing hearth : "Go," said he to the messenger, "go, and tell your lord that I spoke thus. In such manner may the Creator of all things rend and destroy the power and life of the perjurer and the traitor, and consume him to ashes!" Thus did the Frison king repel the foul temptation to stain his honor and break the covenant of hospitality.

When the spring came, Wilfrid bethought himself once more of Rome, and taking leave of Adgils, pursued his journey ; he had more companions probably than Eddi, unless the precentor's *we* stands only for his bishop and himself. Passing through part of Thierry's dominions and providentially escaping all the snares laid for him, he entered Austrasia, the kingdom of Dagobert II. That prince on his return from Ireland, when recalled to his throne, had crossed England, and had been received and hospitably entertained by Wilfrid at Ripon or elsewhere. A forgetfulness of good turns, though common to kings, does not seem to have formed part of Dagobert's character. Indeed, Wilfrid's hospitality had been, like everything about him, most princely. He had not been contented to lodge and feast his foreign guest, but he had provided him with horses and attendants to accompany him to his own country. Indeed, if Eddi's account be strictly true, so great had Wilfrid's reputation been beyond the seas, that, when Dagobert was recalled, the embassy was sent to Wilfrid desiring him to take the prince out of the Irish monastery where he was, and send him home. Possibly, though only made a monk by compulsion, there might have been some ecclesiastical difficulty in the matter, and the intervention of a powerful and honored bishop might be

useful. Dagobert received his ancient host with royal hospitality, and the see of Strasbourg being then vacant, the most important diocese in his kingdom, he pressed Wilfrid to accept it. But Wilfrid had clearly ascertained to himself his own vocation. In younger days he had almost wonderfully divined the work he was to do, and past experience had satisfied him as to the position which it was his duty to maintain towards the Church of his times. There was another reason, too, which might weigh with him against accepting the bishopric of Strasbourg. He had found the English Church in the most deplorable state of erastian subjection to the civil power. Through his own labors and through the energy of St. Theodore England was beginning to be convalescent, whereas the French Church, under the Merovingian dynasty, was in quite a fearful state of servility. Language can scarcely be found adequate to describe the miserable and apparently hopeless corruption of the French Church in this respect. One is shocked at finding even the blessed Saints carried away by the stream, and addressing incestuous murderers with an adulation absolutely disgraceful. The letter of St. Avitus of Vienne to Gundebald of Burgundy, the conduct of St. Pretextatus of Rouen with regard to the infamous Brunehild, the flattery of St. Fortunatus of Poitiers to the execrable Fredegund, called the female Nero,—these things shew how deeply the spirit of slavish deference to worldly power had eaten into the very heart of the Gallican Church. The spirit of St. Babylas and St. Ambrose had ceased to exist among the French prelates: but it had not died out in the Church. France itself was amazed at the cheering exhibition of *it in the truly great St. Columban, the Irishman. The plain-spoken sternness, the vehement denunciation, t*

cutting rebuke, the overawing intrepidity of that wonderful man towards Thierry II. and Brunehild stood out in strange contrast with the obsequious humility and abject demeanour of the French bishops. But it was not till the ninth century, or the latter half of the eighth, that the Gallican Church displayed the noble independence, the boldness towards ungodly rulers, which were for so long its honorable distinction. It was not likely then that Wilfrid would leave a work half accomplished, and enter upon it afresh under greater disadvantages in a country not his own. Doubtless he looked forward to the result of his appeal to Rome, as a means of helping on the great work of freeing his native Church from its degrading thralldom. Dagobert does not seem to have taken Wilfrid's refusal amiss. He forwarded him honorably on his journey to Rome, giving him one of his bishops, Deodatus, as a companion.<sup>2</sup>

Wilfrid now passed on into Italy, and entered the Lombard kingdom. But the emissaries of Ermenburga had been before him : would that virtue were as un-sleeping as wickedness always is ! Bertari, or Berthaire, was at that time the sovereign of the country,<sup>3</sup> and is described as a humble and quiet man, and one who *trembled* at God's word. Lombardy was no doubt an interesting country to Wilfrid. Its Bavarian rulers, and especially Aripert, were catholics, and had done much towards the conversion of their heretical subjects. Bertari had been expelled from his kingdom by

<sup>2</sup> Episcopus Tullensis, Mabillon calls him. He subscribed the acts of the Roman Council under Agatho. See Spelman in Conc.

<sup>3</sup> He is called by Eddi King of Campania : but see Professor Leo of Halle's Hist. of Italy, i. 90, *et seq.* and Mabillon. Obs. præv. xiv. in Vit. S. Wilf. Cressy turns Campania into Champagne, which province does not seem to have belonged to the Lombards.

Grimoald, the duke of Benevento; but the usurpation, though cruel, proved a happy one to the Lombards, as Grimoald completed their conversion, and established close relations between the pope and his people. During his exile, Bertari had been the guest of the great khan of the Avars, in Hungary, who was a pagan. When Wilfrid first arrived, Bertari, it is said, received him with a frowning countenance, being strongly prepossessed against him by the representations of his English enemies: but when Wilfrid had stated his case, Bertari was not contented with mere hospitality, but did all he could to enable him to bring the matter to a favorable issue. As the remembrance of past hospitality had been the cause of Dagobert's great kindness, so hospitality in exile had softened Bertari's heart, and made him merciful to strangers. "Your enemies have sent messengers to me from Britain," said he to Wilfrid, "saluting me, and promising me great gifts if I would seize a bishop of theirs clandestinely flying to the Apostolic See, and hinder his journey thither. But I refused so wicked a proposal, telling them that I was once, in the days of my youth, an exile from my country, when I passed my time with a certain king of the Huns, who made a covenant with me, in the name of his idol god, that he would never betray me, or give me up to my enemies. After a while ambassadors came from my enemies to the pagan king, promising him a bushel of gold pieces if he would allow them to slay me; but he consented not, saying, 'Doubtless, my gods would cut off my life if I did this wickedness, seeing I have made a covenant by my gods.' How much more then should I," added Bertari, "who know the true God, refrain from losing my soul for the gain of even the whole world?" Thus Wilfrid was

dismissed from the Lombard court with great honor and a princely escort.

Did the holy bishop travel on foot like a pilgrim? He only rode in Yorkshire, when St. Theodore compelled him; did he return to his mortifying ways, when this was no longer enjoined upon him? Or, out of consideration for Deodatus, did he travel on horseback, for the affectionate alacrity of Eddi would be overjoyed to suffer any hardship in company with Wilfrid? On horseback or on foot doubtless they travelled like pilgrims; the psalter was not forgotten, and Eddi too, the chanter, with them; it was an itinerant choir in itself, that little band that went on with Wilfrid to the fountain of hope, strength, and justice, St. Peter's chair. In the tenth century, we read of monks singing the office on horseback, and so protecting themselves from that dissipation of mind which the ever-varying show of outward objects would be likely to produce. What a great part of practical religion is an habitual self-recollection, and of all habits none is so difficult to acquire, none requires to be formed with more scientific method! Meditation itself is a thing to be learned, and learned piece by piece, like a foreign language; otherwise, it is nothing better than a vague movement of the mind through a shifting series of pious moods, neither bracing the will nor inflaming the affections, but enervating both. The high mountains and the shady woods, the flowery pastures and the bending brooks, the summer scents and the blue dome of sky, the marches of the beautiful clouds and the witchery of light and shade,—we think it something to have our minds filled with these as we travel, and to connect them with the thought of Him from whom all beauty emanates. Nay, it is well

if, by His grace, we do contrive to raise our love of natural objects above the low level of mere unreal poetry ; but the monks, surely, did far better. It does not appear that they were not susceptible of natural beauty, but certainly these men, the most sensitive, tender-hearted of their kind, do not appear to have thought much of such things. They were collected in the thought of God ; the Passion of our Lord, the Dolours of His Blessed Mother, the sobering aspects of the Four Last Things,—these were the objects of their contemplations ; and they sufficed. They had not room for more ; outward shows were distracting, so they sang psalms as they journeyed, that they might not see them. Thus we read of Odo of Clugni crossing the Cottian Alps with Gerald bishop of Riez, and they chanted psalms as they rode, and if the chanting was interrupted, it was, not to praise God for some outward beauty, but to serve Him by some heroic act of lowliness and charity.<sup>4</sup> Alas !—it must be said—there is but little religion in poetry, because there is so little reality : the truth of poetry is the truth of expression. Poetry does not readily commute itself into action ; how far, then, is it from a wise or holy truthfulness ! Men should beware of loving outward nature overmuch : it is an ensnaring thing, more ensnaring than they think. There is a show of something very devotional about pantheism, a cheap praise of the Most High, which is far indeed from prayer ; men would have it serve, and the world is glad it should pass current for such, as an equivalent for submission to mysterious dogmas and obedience to actual commands. What led to idolatry once, is leading to pantheism now. Job deemed it a

<sup>4</sup> See Maitland's *Dark Ages*, p. 301.

thing to repent of, if so be a man had transgressed that way, when his heart was secretly enticed at beholding the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness.<sup>5</sup> Let this caution be forgiven, though it sound so unpoetical; it may be needed, where the need is not suspected.

Doubtless, then, Wilfrid and his band chanted as they rode. By the reedy moats of Mantua, and the hazy plain of Bologna, over the fractured sides of the Apennines, by the margin of the blue Bolsena, and over the treeless, misty, discolored pastures of the Campagna, the little band went on. They chronicled not (so we conjecture) sunsets and glorious storms, or the cool liberty of vernal evenings, but they sang the Psalms of David, and the hymns of Western Christendom, and spoke of the science of the Saints, of sin, temptation and austerities, and mourned or rejoiced over the fortunes of the Church, and fortified each other against the then reigning heresy of the Monothelites, and did good in untiring ways as they went along. One obvious subject there was which we think was little heard of, and therefore by the rest the more thought of, and that was Wilfrid's wrongs. And so the bishop of York, beyond his former hopes, entered a second time the ancient gates of Rome.

With what words can we better speed St. Wilfrid into that great and good city than with those which Alcuin, the famous Yorkshireman, addressed to archbishop Ethelhard of Canterbury,—for Wilfrid's life had shewn that he had monished himself in like fashion, and in his human measure had lived up to his own admonition. "Think," writes Alcuin to Ethelhard,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> xxxi. 26, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Alcuin ap. Dunham, ii. 252.

“think of thy renowned predecessors, the teachers and lights of all Britain. While thou worshippest amidst their holy relics, thou canst not fail to be assisted by their intercessions, so long as neither the pleasures of the world allure, nor the fear of kings terrifies thee from the path which they trod. Never forget that thy throat should be the trumpet of God, thy tongue the herald of salvation to all men. Be a faithful shepherd, not a hireling ; a ruler, not a subverter ; a light, not darkness ; a fortress defended by firm trust, not a house built on sand ; a glorious warrior of Christ, not a vile apostate ; a preaching, not a flattering, priest. It is better to fear God than man ; to please Him rather than the other. For what is a flatterer except a smooth-tongued enemy ? he destroys both himself and his hearer. Thou hast received the pastoral rod and the staff of brotherly affection, with that to rule, with this to console, to the end that the sorrowful may be comforted, the obstinate chastised by thee. The power of the judge is to kill, thine to make alive. Why fearest thou the sword of man, seeing that thou hast received from Christ the key of the kingdom ? Remember that He suffered for thee ; fear not to speak for Him. Through love of thee He hung pierced with nails on the Cross ; wilt thou, in thine elevated seat, be silent through fear of man ? Not so, my brother, not so ! In the same manner as He hath loved thee, love thou Him ! He who most labors will receive the greatest reward. If thou suffer persecution through preaching the word, what more desirable ? since God Himself hath said, Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. *Be a comforter to the wretched, a father to the poor, to all affable.* Let thine hand be liberal in

almsgiving ; promptly give, reluctantly receive. Remember that a priest is the messenger of the most High God, and that the holy law must issue from his mouth. Comfort the weak-hearted, invigorate the dejected, bring back the wanderers into the way of truth, instruct the ignorant, monish the knowing, and let your lives be the best teachers."

There sat upon the chair of St. Peter, at this time, a Sicilian monk named Agatho. He had scarcely worn the tiara, when Wilfrid entered Rome. It must now have been, at the earliest, quite the end of July, or, perhaps, and it is more likely, August was some way advanced. We learn this, and it has a peculiar interest in Wilfrid's life, quite incidentally ; for we are told that Agatho had not been long on the throne, when Wilfrid arrived at Rome. Now Pope Donus died on the 11th of April, 679, and we learn by the records of the pontiffs, that the see was vacant two months and a half ; so that Agatho could hardly be elected before the 25th of June, and then there were sundry ceremonies of consecration, enthronization, and the like ; so that we may well conclude that it was in reality about the close of August, 679, that Wilfrid came to the threshold of the Apostles. And why is it interesting to know this ?

We remember an August day whose bright dawn stole up the tinted woods of Hexham and glanced among the breakers of Lindisfarne, and that dawn was overclouded by the bad news it brought, that the light of the north was withdrawing into exile. We remember an August day when a bishop of York stood before the king and council of Northumberland, and the bishop *spoke* of Rome, and the king scoffed, and the witless nobles laughed unmannerly and loud, and the bishop

prophesied evil things of that same August day next year. The twelve moons had waned, and the sun shone on the white walls and the low-browed gates of York, where the bishop was not: he was far away, mayhap entering the gates of Rome. And there was a sad sound of sorrow from gate to gate in York, silence among the rich, lamentations among the poor. A battle had been fought on the Nottinghamshire side of the Trent, and Egfrid and his Northumbrians had been defeated by Ethelred and the Mercians; and Lincolnshire, whose Church Egfrid had torn from Wilfrid, was now torn from his kingdom by the wrath of God; and that prince, young Elfwin, beloved beyond all princes, beautiful and gallant, and but eighteen years of age,—he was slain, and his corpse was brought in through the gates of York that day, while the people wailed in the town, and the monks prayed in the cathedral of St. Paulinus; and here and there a high-hearted Churchman, who saw the greatness of the visitation and its cause, muttered to himself *Lætata est Ægyptus in profectione eorum, quia incubuit timor eorum super eos*; and all, monks and people, thought of August last and the bishop's prophecy, and there was much talk of Wilfrid in the streets of York that night; but the good bishop was far away in the crowd and crossing of time-honored Rome.

Agatho, the Sicilian monk, was pope but a short time; but his diligence carried him through an immense deal of work for the Church;<sup>7</sup> and during his pontificate the third Council of Constantinople was held, and the Monothelites condemned; and he, like Wilfrid, had a taste for adorning churches, and gathered great sums for the two basilicas of St. Peter's and St. Mary Major's.

<sup>7</sup> Beaufort, *Hist. des Papes*, ii. 36.

Wilfrid had now a difficult task before him. He found St. Theodore in high repute at Rome, both naturally and deservedly. Whether St. Benedict Biscop had then left Rome or was just on the point of leaving, we cannot decide ; but in that very autumn, Pope Agatho put John, the archchanter of St. Peter's and abbot of St. Martin's, under St. Benedict's escort, and sent him into England to see if the Church there was at all infected with the Monothelite heresy, and to invite St. Theodore to come to the Council his holiness intended to convene at Rome in the ensuing year. In what esteem the Pope held St. Theodore, we may gather from the language of his letter to the emperors Heraclius and Tiberius regarding this very Council. " Our hope was to have joined to this our assembly our fellow-bishop Theodore, a learned philosopher and archbishop of the great island of Britain, together with other bishops abiding in those parts, and for that reason we have hitherto deferred this Council." Such was the antagonist, indeed enemy, with whom Wilfrid had to cope. His case had excited great interest in Rome, even before his arrival ; for Kenwald, a very holy monk, had been there some time with papers from St. Theodore, containing articles of accusation against Wilfrid, and expressed in language of great bitterness. Wilfrid was behind-hand. Was it a distrust of the justice of his cause which had made him so backward ? No,—the bishop of York had been preaching the Gospel to the poor Frisons. St. Hilda's name, too, was known in Rome, for Rome has an eye and ear far-stretching and capacious as the Universal Church ; and the abbess was not content to say her office on the top of her wave-beaten promontory in peace ; her messengers were at Rome to make Wilfrid's matters worse. Who shall look for peace in a Church that is Militant, whose

very Saints war one with another, not because they are not Saints, but because the battle is in the dark ?

Wilfrid's horizon was indeed clouded. Wronged men while they seek for justice, worship it in their thoughts, and deem it near and easy of access : but when they stand at the judgment seat, that holy power seems veiled ; what was clear grows confused ; a man distrusts himself, and then loses heart, because he sees that right seldom lies wholly on one side. But Wilfrid was in Rome, and to his ardent mind there was all-sufficient consolation in that simple fact. He knew even then what we know still better—what Rome is in the long run, how her spirit runs itself clear of perversions and defilements, and temporary disturbances. In front of the great basilica of the Prince of the Apostles stands a huge obelisk, which typifies the world, and it is surmounted by a cross containing certain relics of the True Cross, and the inscription is the third Antiphon at Lauds and Vespers on Holy Cross Day, *Ecce Crucem Domini ! fugite, partes adversæ, vicit leo de tribu Juda, radix David, Alleluja !* *On the whole*, is not this a very truthful allegory of the past history of the Holy See ? If things have gone amiss, and at times looked dark for a while, was there not after all both history and prophecy in the notice Rienzi posted on the door of San Giorgio in Velabro, the Church of England's patron Saint, on Ash Wednesday, 1347, *In breve tempo li Romani torneranno al loro antico buono stato ?* The Congregation of our Lady of Weeping prays in that Church now.

Which of the seven basilicas or fifty-four parish churches of Rome answers to the description of the church of St. Saviour, of Constantine, we do not know ; *perhaps San Clemente* on the Esquiline, or *San Pietro in Montorio*, above the Tiber. However, of such in

portance did Pope Agatho deem Wilfrid's case, that he convened a special synod of fifty bishops and abbots to decide upon it, and they held their session in the church of St. Saviour. The authentic report of this Council is given by William of Malmesbury and also by Spelman in his Councils, and is as follows.<sup>8</sup>

"In the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the twelfth year of the reign of our most pious and glorious emperor Constantine the Elder,<sup>9</sup> and his brethren our new-made emperors, Heraclius and Tiberius, in the seventh Indiction, in the month of October, Agatho the most blessed Pope of the Catholic Church presiding : the most holy Gospels being set before in the Church of our Saviour named from Constantine, and together sitting with him these holy and learned bishops as assessors in the present cause, Crescens bishop of Vinon, Phoberius, Andreas of Ostia, Juvenal of Albano.

"Agatho, the most holy and blessed bishop of the Catholic Church and Apostolic City, said thus to the bishops sitting with him : 'I do not believe that your holy fraternities are ignorant of the cause moving me to call you to this assembly. For my desire is that your reverences would join with me in hearing and treating of a debate lately arisen in the Church of the British Isle, where, through God's grace, the multitude of true believers is increased. A relation of which controversy hath been brought to us, as well by information of persons thence arrived here, as by writings.'

"Then Andrew, the most reverend Bishop of Ostia, and John of Porto, said : 'The ordering of all Churches dependeth on the authority of your Apostolic Holiness, who sustains the place of the blessed Apostle St. Peter.

<sup>8</sup> Spelman, i. 158, ap. Cressy, xviii. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Pogonatus.

But moreover we, by your command, have read unto our fellow-bishops, sitting here with us, the several writings which messengers directed hither from Britain presented to your Holiness : as well those which certain messengers, a good while since, brought from the most reverend archbishop there, together with the informations of others against a certain bishop who (as they say) is privily slipped away, as also those which were presented by the devout bishop Wilfrid, bishop of the Holy Church of York, who, having been cast out of his see by the forenamed holy archbishop, is come hither. In all which writings, though many questions be inserted, yet we do not find that by any ecclesiastical canons he has been convicted of any crimes, and consequently he was not canonically and legally ejected. Neither do his accusers here present charge him with any naughty acts meriting a degradation. On the contrary it appears to us, that, notwithstanding his unjust sufferings, he hath borne himself modestly, abstaining from all seditious contentions. All that he hath done is, that, being driven out of his see, the said venerable bishop Wilfrid made known his cause to his fellow-bishops, and is come for justice to this Apostolic See.'

"Agatho, the most holy and blessed bishop of the Catholic Church and of the Apostolic City of Rome, said to his brethren sitting with him, ' Let Wilfrid, the venerable bishop of the Holy Church of York, who, I am informed, attends at the doors of our cabinet, be here admitted, and bring with him the petition which he is said to have compiled.' The holy bishop Wilfrid being entered into the venerable cabinet, said, ' I beseech your Holiness, be pleased to command that my petition may be openly read.' The most holy bishop Agatho said, ' Let the petition of venerable Wilfrid be received and pub-

licly read.' And John, the notary, received and read it to the holy and apostolic Council in tenor following :

“ ‘ I Wilfrid, an humble and unworthy bishop, have at last by God’s assistance brought my steps to this supreme residence of apostolic dignity, as to a strong tower of safety, whence doth proceed the regulation according to sacred canons to all the Churches of Christ ; and therefore I do assure myself that your venerable fraternities, both by my suggestion in writing, and likewise by the discourse which, at my first coming, I made to your Holiness, have been sufficiently informed that certain persons have violently and unjustly invaded my bishopric, without convicting me of any fault, and in an assembly in which were present Theodore the most holy archbishop of Canterbury and other bishops, they have endeavoured to usurp my see which I had administered for the space of more than ten years ; and in my diocese three bishops have been promoted, though their promotion be contrary to the canons. Now, upon what motive or provocation the most holy archbishop Theodore by his authority without my consent should ordain three bishops in my see, out of reverence to his person, who was sent thither from this Apostolic Chair, I am unwilling to examine. Notwithstanding, if it shall appear that against the rule of ecclesiastical canons, being driven from my ancient see, without any offence committed which is so severely punishable by the said canons, I have for all that been free from all factious tumultuousness, and quietly departed away, after I had protested my innocence, and the illegal proceedings against me, before the bishops of the said province, I do here submit myself to your apostolical judgment. If your sentence shall be that I remain deprived, I do with all willingness and humble devotion embrace it. But if you shall

think fit that I be restored to my bishopric, this one thing I shall only beg of this Apostolic See, that the aforesaid invaders may be expelled from the dioceses which I, though unworthy, have so many years governed. Yet, if you shall judge expedient that more prelates be ordained in the said province of which I have been the sole bishop, I beseech you to take order that such may be promoted there as may be persons with whom I may quietly and peaceably join in the administration of it.'

"After the petition had been read, Agatho, the most holy and blessed bishop of the holy Catholic Church and Apostolic City of Rome, said, 'It is no small satisfaction to this assembly, that in this petition the holy bishop Wilfrid hath manifested to us, that, though he hath been unduly cast out of his see, yet he never made any obstinate resistance by secular power, but with all humility begged the assistance of blessed St. Peter, prince of the Apostles, withal professing his readiness to submit to whatsoever sentence the same blessed Apostle, from whom we receive our authority, shall pronounce by my mouth.'

"The Sacred Synod, there residing, among other decrees, unanimously consented to this, 'We do ordain and decree, that the holy bishop Wilfrid be restored to the bishopric which he lately possessed; and that the archbishop shall ordain for his coadjutors such persons as himself shall, with the consent of a synod to be assembled there, make choice of: and as for those persons, who in his absence have illegally intruded into his bishopric, let them be utterly expelled from thence. And whosoever shall refuse to receive this our decree, let them be interdicted, and let them be anathematized, and stricken by the authority of the

blessed Peter, the prince of the Apostles, whether the offender be bishop, priest, deacon, clerk, monk, or laic.’”

Such was the result of Wilfrid’s solemn appeal. The characteristic<sup>1</sup> moderation and discernment of the Roman court are visible throughout. Though its judgment set aside the arbitrary and indefensible use which St. Theodore had made of his legatine jurisdiction, yet no condemnation of the archbishop was recorded, for none was asked ; and while the court annulled the division of Wilfrid’s diocese, as now arbitrarily made, yet it discerned the wisdom of St. Theodore’s project of reform, and provided for the execution of it in a canonical way, and saving the rights of Wilfrid himself. And as to the bishop, how conspicuous is his saintly moderation in his petition ! Look at his whole conduct. Connected as he was with the northern nobility as the educator of their children, connected with them so closely as to provoke the royal jealousy, supported in his ecclesiastical views, and in his resistance to the legate, by a party among the English bishops, with hosts of ardent monks at his beck, and the Mercian king, his bosom friend, on the frontiers, and his old patron Alfrid, discontented in Ireland, and ready, we may believe, to use any means for gaining the Nor-

<sup>1</sup> It would be edifying to trace the spirit of the Roman court through all ages and in all departments, and see how a most unworldly, dispassionate moderation has distinguished it. It is quite solemn and overawing. The local inquisition was milder at Rome than elsewhere. The hesitation before approving of a reform in a degenerate order is painful to a reader at first, but on consideration it appears admirably wise and providentially ordered. Surely, when evil has most mingled there, there has been something about that court which earthly measures cannot mete. In truth they who do *not see God* there, may well suspect Antichrist.

thumbrian crown, was ever a turbulent ecclesiastic, "arrogant and seditious," "intolerably proud, artful, and insinuating,"<sup>2</sup> in a more favorable position for raising a rebellion against an unjust king, or exciting foreign war? What materials for conspiracy were ready at his hands! What a subtle and commanding intellect, what an untiring personal energy, to make use of them! But the canons were enough for Wilfrid. At any time, but in that strong-handed age especially, Wilfrid's prompt retirement and submission afforded a spectacle as edifying as it was unworldly. His delay for Christ's sake among the barbarous Frisons, his refusal of the bishopric of Strasbourg, the gentleness of his demeanour at Rome, all shew a self-restraint and meekness most admirable. There are, indeed, few things in the characters of the Saints more edifying to us of a lawless age, of a nation too much enslaved to its boast of freedom to be really in a high sense free, and of a Church without the show or meagre shadow of a discipline, than the absence of that eagerness of self-justification so painfully exhibited by us in every relation of life, and which men have at last come to defend as a moral principle. In plain words, to be Christlike is to be immoral; to do our duty to God by imitating His blessed Son, is to leave undone our duty to the world. O when will it be understood again, that a churchman's duty to the world is to thwart it, to interfere with it, to retard it, to threaten

<sup>2</sup> Hutchinson's Hist. of Durham; a work so extremely ignorant on all points at all lying beyond its local subject-matter, as to be of no weight: *e. g.* the author tells us that in those days the names bishop and archbishop were used indifferently; and that St. Theodore, "to conciliate the mind of Oswy," deposed St. Chad, *Oswy's own nominee*, to put in Wilfrid, *whom Oswy had tried to supersede*.

it, to withdraw from it, each as the case may be, and that he only is really a benefactor to the world who so treats it ! When will the glory of God, and not the worship of reputation, be the sole excuse for speaking when the noble privilege of calumny falls to our lot ! If we do not examine our consciences, we cannot meditate ; if we do not meditate, we cannot learn calmness ; if we do not learn calmness, how shall we hold our peace at falsehood and under ill treatment ; yet, if we speak, how shall we be Christlike ?

Very different was Wilfrid's conduct. Could anything be more helpless in appearance than the exiled bishop, with the merriment of Egfrid's vulgar nobles ringing in his ears, traversing hill and dale to get beneath the shadow of the Vatican, king and archbishop against him at home, prejudice and danger abroad ? How defenceless do the Saints ever seem upon the earth, a tribe of errant pilgrims, poor, despised, trodden under foot, yet conquering ! Like Wilfrid, they seem to lack wisdom : they do not make the best of their position ; their own unpractical resignation perpetuates disadvantages, and when the world condescendingly praises their virtues, it sees no grasp, no compass of mind, no largeness of heart, no heavenliness of spirit in what they do. But how dear, not to Saints only, but in a measure to ordinary Christians also, is this defencelessness, this want of visible shelter,—for strength resides in weakness ; since Christ vouchsafed to lie, an infant, in the manger,—to hang, a reputed criminal, on the Cross, and vouchsafes to abide on the altars and in the ciboria of the Church, under the meanness of the sacramental species, awaiting night and day the scanty homage of His cold-hearted people. This new thing upon the earth, this energy of weakness, well-weighed, unriddles

the whole history of the Church's triumph, and reverses the whole series of the world's judgments upon her.

Wilfrid was now free to enjoy the inestimable privileges of a sojourn at Rome. Whatever doubt there might be, and there was not a little, as to the way in which Egfrid would receive the decree of the Synod, Wilfrid's mind was at ease; and he was able to attain that calm self-recollection needful for visiting the holy places, and reverencing the relics of the countless martyrs which make that city like a vestibule of Heaven. Can we doubt that he revisited the oratory of St. Andrew, where his youthful prayer had been answered? But, besides these spiritual enjoyments, for such in truth they are, Wilfrid had business still at Rome. He had to fulfil king Ethelred's commission, and obtain the papal confirmation of the privileges of Peterborough Abbey. Among other things, the same indulgences were granted to those who made a pilgrimage to Peterborough, as to those who went to Rome,—of course, we must suppose it was only in case age, infirmity, or some other notable cause disabled penitents from undertaking the salutary austerities of the distant pilgrimage. But there is one clause in the charter which makes us greatly suspect a forgery: the abbots of Peterborough are appointed legates of the Holy See for ever, a privilege quite at variance with the uniform honor paid by the Roman court to the throne of Canterbury. In the year following, (for Wilfrid stayed over the winter,) a council of one hundred and twenty-five bishops was assembled at Rome to condemn the Monothelite heresy, and Wilfrid represented the English Church therein. The Monothelite heresy was at this time ravaging the Church, especially in the East. It had its beginnings

about the year 630, partly in a faulty inference from the canons of the Council of Chalcedon, and partly in the crafty practices of some prelates who were Eutychians in secret. It was taught simultaneously from the patriarchal chairs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch ; and Pope Honorius,<sup>3</sup> if not actually heretical, was misled into favoring the heretics : Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem, was the St. Athanasius of his day. It was fostered by the Exposition of Heraclius, and sheltered by the Formula of Constans ; but the pious orthodoxy of Constantine Pogonatus, and the energy of Pope Agatho, obtained its formal condemnation in the sixth General Council in Constantinople, which taught two natural wills in Christ, and two natural operations, undividedly, inconvertibly, inseparably, and unconfusedly, according to the doctrine of the fathers. It was to this doctrine that Wilfrid bore witness in behalf of the English Church. His subscription is inserted in this way.<sup>4</sup>—"Wilfrid, the devout bishop of York, having appealed to the See Apostolic in a particular cause of his own, by whose authority he was absolved of all accusations, both certain and uncertain, and afterwards called and admitted of this Synod of one hundred and twenty-five bishops, where, in the name of all the Churches in the northern parts of England, and in the isles of Ireland, inhabited by English and Bretons, as likewise the nations of the Scots and Picts, he made open profession of the true catholic faith, confirming it, moreover, by his subscription."

<sup>3</sup> Leo II. says Honorius was condemned, not as heretical, but as one "*qui flammam hæretici dogmatis, non ut decuit apostolicam auctoritatem, incipientem extinxit, sed negligendo confovit.*" Baronius is unfair about this.

<sup>4</sup> *Cressy*, xviii. 5.

It is a hard thing for a man of the passing generation to grow a part of the new one : it is a hard thing to fix his affections afresh, to keep his place in the change, to continue the old work with new coadjutors, to change his plan of action without shifting the principle. Yet God's grace is sufficient even for this trial : St. John was kept alive for great ends, when his age had passed away ; and many of the Saints have had to feel themselves each passing year left more and more alone by the departure of those who understood them, and who aided them. The old work is perpetually to be begun afresh ; for the Saints are the schoolmasters of the slow-learning world ; class comes after class, and the holy man dwells among weary beginnings, while he himself is inwardly advancing to perfection. It is a hard lot ; yet what comes of it ? A conviction, which in its depth and strength Saints only know, that God alone is the Supreme Object of our love, and the thought of Him the only helpful stay. " All things come to an end, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad." Wilfrid was growing in years ; he was not old, indeed, for he can hardly have been above forty-four, yet he was old enough for the usual changes of the world to begin to tell upon him, old enough for those whom he had brought to Christ to be winning their rest, while his was still delayed. The twenty-third of June, 679, was a mournful day in the abbey of Ely, while Wilfrid was journeying to Rome. It was a day of sorrow, but of triumphant sorrow ; for does not the Church militant gain, rather than lose, when her Saints pass from the comparative impotence of their holy struggle here to the neighbourhood of Christ, and the helpful intercessions made in the presence of the Beatific Vision ? St. Etheldreda died that day, and though her successor was a

Saint as blessed as herself, yet the gentle daughters of Ely mourned, as nuns and monks alone can mourn, for their mother in the Lord. Perhaps in England's breadth, there was not a life so dear to Wilfrid as that of Etheldreda. It was taken from him. The holy bishop's battle was now to grow yearly more and more a single-handed fight ; yet not more single-handed than the prophet's was, with the spiritual chariots round about him.

Supposing the Roman Council against the Monothelites to have been held, or opened, on Tuesday in Easter week, 680, Wilfrid must have been at least eight months in Rome, and the pope now bade him return into England, bearing the written decrees of the Apostolic See with him. Some danger attended even his return ; for when he had crossed the Alps, he found Dagobert had been slain, and Vaimer, one of Ebroin's creatures, waylaid Wilfrid with an armed band, intending either to slay him, or sell him as a slave. It is sad to remember—yet it illustrates the condition of the French Church—that Vaimer was a bishop. Yet he was not bad enough for Ebroin. He excited, as has been already stated, the jealous suspicion of that monster, by shewing common humanity to St. Leger ; and Ebroin compelled him to be ordained bishop of Troyes, as a means of making him less troublesome. However, even as a bishop we now find him at the head of his armed retainers, waylaying a brother bishop. When he met Wilfrid, he broke out into the most violent language, reproaching him for his former hospitality to Dagobert, whom he denounced as a wicked and abominable tyrant. Wilfrid replied to his charge with such an intrepid meekness that Vaimer's heart was touched. He laid *aside his evil purpose*, confessed himself a sinner, as

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many do who yet have not the heart to do penance thoroughly, and finally bade Wilfrid proceed in God's Name and with the help of St. Peter.

Who could doubt but that St. Theodore would receive with reverential submission the judgment of the Holy See? But we learn a lesson here. A power may be great enough to do an evil which it is impotent to undo. The archbishop had lent himself and his high office to do king Egfrid's evil work; the Saint had at the least swerved from the canons he knew so well, and for the most part observed so strictly. Now that he saw his mistake, he was powerless; he could not move one step towards a reparation of the wrong. The spiritual improvement of his people by the multiplication of dioceses had never been anything beyond a pretext on the king's part. When he derided the court of Rome, he had been sincere; and he was consistent now. Wilfrid had some difficulty even in gaining an audience, and when he did obtain admittance, he found Egfrid surrounded by the bishops hostile to himself. He presented the pope's letters sealed, and Egfrid commanded them to be opened and read. But Wilfrid's patience was now to be put to a new trial, even more difficult to bear than any which he had encountered hitherto. If Egfrid had ventured openly to set at nought the authority of Rome, any honest ecclesiastic might joyfully have confronted persecution; for half the pain of persecution is removed when the goodness of the cause is plain. But England in the seventh century had not come to the wicked boldness of setting Rome at nought. The artful king subjected Wilfrid to a more ingenious torture. He charged him with having obtained the decrees by false representations and by bribery; whereupon he committed the bishop to the custody of Offrith, one of his most cruel officers,

took his attendants from him, and ordered him to be imprisoned in a dungeon which the daylight could not enter. But even this cruelty did not move the bishop : his countenance did not change as he listened to the unexpected sentence : his thoughts were for his attendants, not for himself : he compassionately exhorted them to patience, assuring them that the goodness of God could not fail shortly to interfere in his behalf.

When it is the Will of God, His Saints find favor in the most unlikely places. The nature of Offrith seemed to undergo a sudden change. The mere contact with goodness operated as a sort of moral miracle. Still brutal to others, still delighting to superadd torments to the common punishment of a prison, to Wilfrid he was quite another being. He durst not so far disobey the king as not to confine the bishop in utter darkness ; but in all other respects he mitigated, rather than increased, the horrors of his situation. But it was not only from the sight of goodness that Offrith changed his conduct : coarse spirits are more readily acted upon by wonders, and these God now vouchsafed to work by Wilfrid's hands. The keepers who watched the doors of Wilfrid's gloomy cell, heard him continually reciting the Psalter ; and once while he was thus engaged, they beheld a bright light shining through the crevices of the door. They fled in terror from before the presence of the unearthly splendor ; and though Offrith feared greatly at this miraculous illumination of his captive's dungeon, the fear of Egfrid was also strong upon him, and he durst not take Wilfrid from his dismal lodging. The Saint needed not a change ; where Christ's consolations were most likely to find him out, there was it best for *him to be*, and it is where the help of man least avails *that the Arm of God is put forth most readily and most*

cheerfully. But this was not all. Offrith's wife was afflicted with a sore disease, which ended in the formation of a large abscess. Her torments were fearful ; nor when it burst was she relieved, for the wound remained open, a painful and gaping sore in the middle of her throat. Soon afterwards she had some kind of fit which rendered her speechless, cold, and stiff, as though she had been a corpse. Her husband, believing her at the point of death, ran for Wilfrid, and throwing himself at his feet, like the jailer at Philippi, besought him to pardon him all his severities, and to come to his wife. Wilfrid, having first prayed earnestly, sprinkled some holy water on the sore,<sup>5</sup> upon which the woman was immediately restored, and gave thanks to God. Her name was Ebba ; she afterwards became an abbess, and Eddi says she was accustomed with tears to relate this miracle which had been wrought on her behalf.

Offrith now determined to be no longer the king's instrument in the persecution of so manifest a Saint, and having acquainted Egfrid with all that had happened, he desired that Wilfrid might be removed from his keeping. The miserable king seemed given over to a judicial infatuation. The spirit of unbelief hardened his heart, so that he became like Pharaoh, a vessel of reprobation. Calling Offrith a faint-hearted coward, he committed Wilfrid to an officer of the name of Tydlin,<sup>6</sup> as to a jailer of unquestionable ferocity. Under his care Wilfrid was removed to the town of Dunbar, where Tydlin was governor. But God was still pleased to witness to the sanctity of His servant by many signs and

<sup>5</sup> A similar miracle was wrought by St. Antoninus, abbot of Sorrento.

<sup>6</sup> *William of Malmesbury* confuses the names of the man and the town. See *Mabillon's* note. *Cressy* follows *Malmesbury* in the error.

wonders, the truth of which there does not seem the slightest room for doubting, related as they are by Eddi Stephani, Wilfrid's own companion, and a man of unquestionable piety. Tydlin, casting his victim into a dungeon, ordered his minions to load him with heavy chains. Take the measure as they would, either the fetters were too large and slipped off, or they were too small and would not go on, or if they fitted, rested on the Saint's limbs but for a moment, and then snapped asunder, as if, says Eddi, the feet that went about preaching the Gospel could not be bound, nor the hands that baptized tortured with manacles. Still Wilfrid sang psalms, like Paul of old, for some portion of the apostle's lion heart was his.

To man's eye how miserable was Wilfrid's lot, darkness, cold, hunger, weariness ! How enviable the lot of Egfrid and of Ermenburga ! The royal pair, we are told, made continual progresses about their dominions ; now they abode in gay cities, now in princely castles : wassail and the chase were their chief cares ; they delighted in pomp, and their progresses were attended with almost more than regal splendor. What could there be to envy in a lot like Wilfrid's ? The presence of God's favor, worth more — far more, than sunlight in the darkness of his cell ! When Wilfrid received the pope's order to leave Rome and bear the decrees of the Synod into England, he made a circuit of the holy places, and offered his devotions there ; and for the consolation of the Saxon Churches, he obtained from different persons the relics of various Saints, which were carefully sealed up, with the name of the Saint written outside. These he *brought* with him into England, to enrich with the *benediction* of their presence his native land, an *impor-*  
*ion* of more solid value to the country than countless

bales of costly merchandize. He deposited these relics in a chrismary, such as was used for carrying the holy oils ; but when he was pillaged by king Egfrid's orders, the queen obtained the chrismary, and kept it in her chamber, or when she went out hung it round her neck, partly out of superstition and partly as a public trophy over her enemy the bishop. But the Ark of God was a fatal prey to the unholy Philistines, and so were the blessed relics to the ungodly queen, and the Saint himself an afflictive conquest to his conquerors. As Pharaoh had no rest till he let the children of Israel go, so had Egfrid trouble on all sides while he so iniquitously persecuted the man of God. Meanwhile, frequent messengers passed between Wilfrid and the king. Egfrid promised to restore everything which had been taken from him and to give him back part of his bishopric, if only he would acknowledge the invalidity of the Roman decrees, and confess that they had been extorted by bribes and false representations. But Wilfrid's mind was not enfeebled by his dark dungeon at Dunbar, nor his spirit broken by the savage treatment of the ruthless Tydlin. In suffering for the honor of Rome he regarded himself as confessing Christ : in that faith was his hidden strength. He declared resolutely that he would lose his life rather than subscribe to what was false, or say one word in disparagement of the Holy See. For the courtiers of Egfrid had declared that money was all-powerful in the court of Rome, and that any decree whatever might be bought there. This doctrine is not outworn yet : but surely Henry had Church-money enough to buy at any cost a divorce from Catherine, if such articles were ordinarily saleable at Rome. *We in England are so accustomed to the buying and selling of benefices, as if they were merchandize, and to the trans-*

fer of souls, as if they were flocks of sheep, that we think it must needs be so elsewhere. Simony is indeed a blight which the Church for many centuries has not been wholly free from; yet perhaps it has never been so legalized at Rome as it has at Westminster.<sup>7</sup> True, however, it was that Wilfrid had not bought his absolution; and what was not true, he would rather die than say. Thus, as in all Wilfrid's actions, Rome is uppermost, Rome first in one shape, then in another; now it comes in the shape of suffering, and Wilfrid acts the confessor manfully. By no torture, not even the appalling one of darkness, can Egfrid drive the Saint to breathe a word in disparagement of Rome: bribes, even the bribe of a bishopric, are equally unavailing; one little untruth! a mitre were dearly bought at such a price as that.

Still were Egfrid and Ermenburga doing progress over the beautiful shires of the north: there were music, and arms, and banners, and songs, and dancing, and the wine-cup, and Wilfrid in his darkness at Dunbar, not allowed so much as a grate whence he might look out over the wild waters of the Frith. And the king and queen came to rest at Coldingham, for the king's aunt was abbess there. This must have been between St. Adamnan's vision of the destruction of the monastery, and St. Ebba's death, which was in August 683 or 684. The royal visitors were probably unwelcome guests in that season of compunction and temporary return to greater strictness; for, though monastic hospitality is unbounded, yet it is their Lord in the person of the

<sup>7</sup> Paley is not usually given to take the highest possible views: *yet a comparison of his interpretation of simony with what we see and hear of daily is very distressing indeed. The modern hatred of St. Gregory VII. has all the wisdom of an instinct.*

poor that monks and nuns love chiefly to entertain. They are more at home when washing the soiled feet of the footsore peasant, and teaching an unmannerly churl to cross himself and say grace, than in waiting upon kings or lords. Considering what royal retainers mostly are, it would have been better far if the degenerate Coldingham had never known such guests. We read, to be sure, that the blessed abbot of La Trappe, for all his sternness, received our own James II. once a year, when William of Nassau had driven him from his throne, and once we read that James's queen came with him. Yet that annual visit was for prayer and spiritual retreat, not a temporary halt in the midst of a royal progress. James had done with progresses ; he went to feast his soul at the wonderful fountains of ardent eloquence which flowed at times from that silent man, De Rancé. Yet good was ordained to come out of the royal visit to Coldingham. During the night the queen fell sick ; in a short time she was frantic with delirium, so outrageous as to disturb the whole monastery. How long the seizure lasted appears uncertain ; at any rate, the next day St. Ebba told the king that the cause of the queen's madness, for such it had seemed, and of her present condition (for her limbs were all contracted, and she lay like one at the point of death), was her profane use of Wilfrid's reliquary and his unjust persecution of the holy bishop. Moreover, the abbess undertook to predict that if Wilfrid's property was restored to him, and he was reinstated in his bishopric, in obedience to the pope's mandate, the queen would speedily recover. But, if this was too much to ask, St. Ebba suggested to the king the restoration of Wilfrid's property, his liberation from prison, and a permission to leave the country. To this latter proposal the king assented. He was

wearied out with the wonders of his troublesome captive, and for all his seeming unbelief, the monarch was now beginning to be touched with awe. The result is too gratifying to be left untold : the queen recovered, and though from what occurred it would appear that her repentance was not immediate, yet God did accord that grace to her at last, and after Egfrid's death she retired into a monastery, bewailing her many sins, and especially her persecution of St. Wilfrid, and through the merits of Christ expiating in the works of penance her past iniquities.<sup>8</sup>

We said the repentance of Ermenburga was not immediate ; yet, perhaps, the inhospitality Wilfrid met with among the Mercians and West Saxons was the result of Egfrid's machinations, rather than Ermenburga's persevering hatred. For the Northumbrian king, like Pharaoh, seems to have repented that he had let Wilfrid go, either out of momentary fear, or through a desire to oblige his aunt. During all this time we hear nothing of the intruding bishops, how they resisted the pope's mandate, probably through disbelief of its being lawfully gained, how they governed their dioceses, or what steps St. Theodore took to repair the mischief he had done. One of Wilfrid's enemies had gone to her rest, the sainted abbess of Whitby ; she died in 680, possibly in November,<sup>9</sup> one year after the decease of St. Etheldreda. However, it is clear that Wilfrid saw no good was to be done by refusing the king's permission to retire, no principle was compromised by submitting to this fresh exile. Gathering, therefore, his companions together,

<sup>8</sup> Of course the Northumbrian queen must not be confounded with *St. Mildred's* mother.

<sup>9</sup> Though of course her feast may have been fixed on the day of some translation of her relics.

and being put in possession of his reliquary and other property, the bishop of York—for such he still was in the eye of the Church of Rome—once more left his diocese and entered the kingdom of Mercia.

The eighth-general persecution, in the reign of Valerian, surpassed for cruelty even the fury of the Decian persecution in this notable particular, that the privilege of saying mass in prison was denied to the confessors who were priests; indeed, it appears from St. Cyprian's epistles, that in the reign of Valerian the holy martyr was unable even to get the eucharist celebrated by other priests in the presence of the lay confessors. This was truly a refinement in cruelty; yet they who hunger and thirst after righteousness have the promise that they shall be filled. It would appear from the narrative, that Wilfrid, in his darkness, had not the privilege of celebrating mass. This, then, would be one chief delight and privilege of his liberty, of higher value than to look upon the sweet face of day, or breathe the liberal air which God has filled with thrilling health. Yet persecution was not yet over. He entered the kingdom of Mercia, the dominions of his friend Ethelred,<sup>1</sup> for whom he had procured the papal confirmation of the Peterborough charter. It is written that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes. Wilfrid had been abundantly instructed in this lesson; yet all

<sup>1</sup> It is stated by some that Ethelred received Wilfrid, that at his command St. Theodore summoned a synod at Bishop's Hatfield to hear the papal bull read, &c. This is said on the authority of the Saxon Chronicle, which was not written before the middle of the eleventh century, and is no authority. Moreover, the Chronicon makes Wilfrid subscribe as *archbishop* of York, which he never was; whereas the Monasticon makes him subscribe "I, Wilfrid, by apostolic favor *regaining the see of York*," &c. In the text, therefore, no notice is taken of this apocryphal relation.

his experience would hardly have prepared him for the base ingratitude of Ethelred. That wisdom is much to be envied which is ever running into error, because the heart is slow to be credulous of evil ; and such was Wilfrid's wisdom. He bent his steps to Mercia first of all, not doubting, surely, of an honorable welcome and a home in exile there ; but he was miserably undeceived. To make up for prince Elfwin's death king Ethelred had married Osdritha,<sup>2</sup> Egfrid's sister, and so peace had been concluded. When Ethelred, therefore, heard how Egfrid had been reluctantly obliged to let Wilfrid go, and how one of his own nobles, named Beorthwald, had received the exiled bishop with fitting hospitality, he was willing to do Egfrid a pleasure, and, like an unkingly churl as he was (though he changed into a Saint), when Wilfrid trusted he had found a home, and was building for himself and his companions a little Zoar, a humble monastery (*monasteriolum*), he banished the Saint from his dominions.

From Mercia Wilfrid passed into the kingdom of the West Saxons : but neither did he find a resting-place there ; for Kentwin's wife was Ermenburga's sister, and, either ignorant of her sister's repentance, or the repentance itself having not yet begun, she used her influence to drive the exile thence also. Weary, yet patient still, unbroken by fatigues, undaunted by persecution, Wilfrid advanced upon his painful pilgrimage, and entered the territory of Ethelwalch, king of the South Saxons. His imprisonment in the north must have been of short duration ; for he returned into North-umberland at Egfrid's death, which took place in 685, and he was five<sup>3</sup> years a missionary bishop among the

<sup>2</sup> William of Malmesbury calls her Ostigild.

<sup>3</sup> This is St. Bede's chronology : we suspect five years are too much

South Saxons, so that he must have arrived at the court of Ethelwalch before the expiration of the year 680.

The kingdom of Sussex was founded by Ella in 477, and for some reason or other it took scarcely any part in the perpetual wars and revolutions which were changing the face of the rest of the island, and seems to have been very much behind the other kingdoms of the heptarchy in civilization. Eddi describes the country as so full of woods and cliffs that nature was a kind of rampart to it, which not only warded off invasion, but by almost prohibiting commerce, kept the people in a rude and ignorant seclusion. King Ethelwalch, however, was a Christian, though he had not been so long; Wulfere, the king of Mercia, had persuaded him to embrace the Gospel and to receive the sacrament of Baptism: and Ebba, the queen of Ethelwalch, was Christian also, being the daughter of Eanfrid, a prince probably of the Wiccii,<sup>4</sup> a tribe adjoining the West Saxons, and upon whose border the synod of Augustine's oak had been held. Moreover, among the South Saxons, a Scottish monk named Dicul ruled a little monastery at Bosenham, which contained only five or six monks, eminent for their spirit of humility and love of holy poverty, yet whose preaching was despised by the people. Notwithstanding the presence of all these Christian materials, no effort seems to have been made, or at least with any success, for the conversion of the people till Wilfrid came. St. Theodore was probably busied with the internal government

to assign to St. Wilfrid's sojourn among the South Saxons, for 680 will scarcely hold the quantity of history compressed into it; or else he did not *return to his diocese* so soon as 685. However, we have *not meddled with the usual received dates in the text so far.*

<sup>4</sup> The Worcestershire men.

of the existing Churches, in establishing canonical practices, and in pushing forward those extensive plans of improvement to which the Saxon Church was afterwards so deeply indebted. Ethelwalch received Wilfrid and his clerks gladly, and besought them to preach the Gospel. Here, therefore, ended for the present the bishop's weary wanderings. By the mercy of God a fresh and wide field was opened before him for the renewal of his missionary labors. As his first exile had been abundantly blessed to the poor Frisons, his second exile was no less so to the benighted men of Sussex. So that Wilfrid might now make the psalmist's words his own, "Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but hast set my feet in a large room."

Something, in all probability, had been silently effected by the Christian profession of their king and queen, and by the winning example of the Scottish monks; for when Wilfrid began to preach, the conversion was almost national at once, and it pleased God to confirm his preaching by a very wonderful miracle. For three whole years a destructive drought had prevailed through all Sussex, and a grievous famine came as its natural consequence. At last the poor sufferers were driven to desperation, and when no longer able to procure food they went down to the cliffs on the abrupt sea-shore by fifties at a time, and joining hand in hand leaped from the top, and were either dashed in pieces on the rocks below or at high tide swallowed by the sea. But on the very day of Wilfrid's preaching there fell a gentle and a copious rain, which gladdened the whole nation, and covered the face of the earth with fresh verdure. It was *natural*, and of course reasonable, to connect this blessing with the coming of the new faith: most gave up *their idol worship*; and the king felt himself sufficiently

supported by public opinion to constrain the few who remained obstinate, and so to abolish idolatry throughout his dominions. In return for this great benefit of the Gospel, Ethelwalch conferred on Wilfrid the peninsula of Selsey, or Island of Seals, near Chichester, with land enough to support eighty-seven families.<sup>5</sup> There Wilfrid built a monastery, of which he took possession with Eddi the precentor, and his four priests, Eappa, Padda, Burghelm and Eadda : it is very questionable whether this did not form the whole retinue of the exiled bishop of York. The episcopal throne was not removed from Selsey to Chichester till the year 1070, when bishop Stigand moved it, yet no successor was appointed to Wilfrid in the see of Selsey till 711. There, for five years, says St. Bede, the bishop of York lived as bishop of Sussex, preaching, baptizing, and confirming ; and doubtless, for all they were Scots, the handful of monks at Bosenham found a kind father in the missionary bishop ; for in spite of his love of the canons, the love of poverty was far more in Wilfrid's eyes ; and, perhaps, when the Easter of 682 came round, Dicul and his monks had been won over to the side of the Roman usages.

When time corrects the mistakes of men and sets their judgments right, it is a gradual work. Time was when the Saints were regarded by so-called philosophic writers as weak, useless people, who retarded improvement rather than accelerated it. Now, both protestant and infidel, by dint of a less partial research, have discovered

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Peck absurdly argues that from this we may gather the number of Wilfrid's retinue, viz. 870 people, and proceeds in consequence to compare him with Wolsey ! Bede's narrative a little further on would have shewn him that the band of exiles were not the only tenants of Selsey.

that the Saints were the great civilizers of their day, and the laborious lives of many a German and French misbeliever have been, and are being, dedicated to repairing the injustice their forefathers have done to the Church and Saints of the dark ages. Surely God will bless with further truth, and even with conversion, such an honorable and equitable toil as this, if a lowly heart keep down the risings of intellectual pride. To those who deeply reverence the memory of the catholic Saints, who look on them with fear and love as intercessors with Christ on our behalf, and do homage to the wondrous virtue of their sacred relics, it is but a little matter to know that they were instruments in promoting earthly civilization : yet was it a Divine work, and so to be dwelt on with admiring love. To get near to God by an ascetic life is incomparably more than to be the greatest discoverer in science or teacher of humanizing arts ; and this is the first thing a catholic looks at in the examples of the Saints ; yet does he not forget, or even inadequately estimate, the lower task which they have been commissioned to fulfil.

Wilfrid's heart was moved with pity for the famishing men of Sussex. True the rain was come, and the dismal withered downs had clothed themselves with bright sward, cheering both heart and eye. Yet the seasons must go round, and the fruitful year fulfil its complement of moons, before seed-time and harvest, and the teeming garner, and the busy threshing-floor would quite end the famine. The bishop saw that the sea and inland brooks were full of fish, and that the ignorant peasants for want of skill could make no use of this Divine bounty. The *art of fishing* went no further than the capture of a few *eels*. The bishop, therefore, borrowed all the eel-nets he *could*, and seems to have made a kind of drag-net of

them. He then went down to the sea with his men, cast in his net, and brought to land three hundred fishes, to the joyous surprise of the poor natives, who perhaps thought the draught had somewhat of a miraculous character about it. But, if they admired the bishop's skill, they loved his kind heart more. Those three hundred fish, thought the men of Sussex, will go to the bishop's monastery; but no, St. Wilfrid's distribution of them was as eloquent as a sermon to the Sussex converts. He divided the fish into three heaps of one hundred each; the first he gave to the poor, the second to the owners of the borrowed nets, the third he reserved for the monastery. Wilfrid had many ways of preaching the Gospel. Was not this a beautiful preaching on that Sussex shore where so lately the famished poor had dashed themselves from the cliffs in the intolerable pangs of hunger? But there was a preaching yet more beautiful upon the low-lying peninsula of Selsey. Not content with instructing and baptizing the free-born tenants on the monastery lands, he counted up the poor slaves who were now his absolute property. There were two hundred and fifty men and women, and these he immediately gifted with their liberty, as if it were a monstrous thing for him to hold a slave who came to enfranchise souls from the servitude of Satan. When the news spread over Sussex that the bishop's slaves in Selsey were set free, was it a wonder that the people flocked to enter through the waters of Baptism into the glorious liberty of the catholic Church? Such was Wilfrid's life in the diocese of Chichester: no doubt there was the holy-water by night, and all the austerities by day which we read of when he was at Ripon; and then there were all the *cares from without*, the cares of a bishop's office, and *that bishop a missionary*. He knew not that in th

thirteenth century there would be a poor persecuted bishop going up and down among the villages of Sussex, persecuted by Henry III. as he was by Egfrid, appealing to Rome, yet for two years ineffectually; Rome, in the thirteenth century, as well as in the seventh, still at her blessed work of rebuking rude, strong-handed kings; a Saint, too, in the see of Canterbury; but St. Edmund was the friend of St. Richard de Wyche, whereas St. Theodore was not yet reconciled to Wilfrid. St. Richard entered into Wilfrid's labors; but he, too, had a struggle to hold them fast. His help came from the same quarter as Wilfrid's, the holy hills of Rome.

Wilfrid's name is also connected with the first public observation of St. Oswald's day; for it was in 681, according to the usual dates, that the pestilence was stayed in the monastery of Selsey, at the intercession of St. Oswald.<sup>6</sup> The Yorkshire monks had brought their northern traditions and devotions with them. This pestilence must have greatly tried the faith and afflicted the heart of Wilfrid; for we read that it carried off some of his original companions as well as many brethren who had been converts from the South Saxons. But here, again, the common chronology seems very dubious. A monastery could hardly have been built and furnished with new brethren to the extent which St. Bede's language implies, within the year after Wilfrid's arrival in the kingdom. Perhaps the best plan for making the narrative straightforward is to assume Bede's five years to be the real duration of St. Wilfrid's sojourn among the South Saxons, and, in opposition to Mabillon, to fix his arrival in Sussex in the year 682, and his return to his diocese in the year 687, the second of Alfrid's reign. St.

<sup>6</sup> See his Life in this Series, No. VI. 74, *et seqq.*

Bede (Hist. iv. 13,) makes him return on Egfrid's death, whereas (v. 19,) he distinctly states that he did not return till the second year of Alfrid's reign, and from this point we shall fix the dates according to this assumption. The year 686 we conjecture to have been spent partly in Sussex and partly in the north.

Meanwhile St. Ebba died, and sundry changes of an ecclesiastical nature took place in Wilfrid's diocese. Indeed, it would seem altogether that it had not been wisely partitioned, or that the king would not let the Church alone. In 681 St. Theodore sent Trumwin into Scotland as bishop of the Picts, but after four years he was compelled to return, and retired into the monastery of Whitby. In 684<sup>7</sup> St. Theodore, at the request of king Egfrid, held a synod in Northumberland, at Twyford-on-the-Alne, in which the archbishop deposed Tumbert, the bishop of Hexham. Eata, who had left the see of Hexham for that of Lindisfarne, was now moved back to Hexham, and St. Cuthbert was compelled to receive consecration, as bishop of Lindisfarne. How St. Theodore held this synod at Twyford in the face of the pope's decrees, the truth of which he had now had abundant time to ascertain, is perfectly inexplicable. Eata was succeeded in the see of Hexham by St. John of Beverley. But, quitting this scene of confusing change, and leaving Wilfrid in his active peace at Selsey, master of all the hearts of all the Sussex men, let us turn to his persecutors Egfrid and Ermenburga.

How provoking is the scantiness of the old chronicles when one would fain set in a clear light the doings of the Saints, the actions of blessed spirits who now live and reign with Christ in Heaven! Why should we be ashamed to confess that we write this life of Wilfrid under con-

<sup>7</sup> Cressy says 685.

tinual constraint, and harassed by a suspended judgment; for ever and anon the story touches on the life of Theodore, and his conduct looks ill-favored, yet perhaps had some good interpretation if we knew enough to find it out? For this we do know, that he was one of the greatest men and holiest Saints which Christendom possessed in its whole width in the seventh age. Why then should we be ashamed of confessing that we dare not write freely about him, for fear of offending God? One may even feel a legitimate distress in reading dramas and imaginary histories, wherein parts are boldly assigned to men, who, though unseen, are yet alive and nigh to God and so calling for our reverence, or reprobate and so laying on us the duty of a solemn silence, or we know not what they are, and so our office is to pray, and to make mention of them at the blessed Sacrifice of the Altar. But at this rate a man may say it is impossible to write the lives of the Saints; we can only compose their panegyrics, and so the force of their example will be lost. No; it is not quite thus: we do not say, the very thought is shocking, that the Saints were sinless; but that in cases where from antiquity or imperfect records, or any other cause, their actions are doubtful, that which in the case of the living we call the judgment of charity becomes in the case of the Saints, whom the Church bids us reverence by name, something incomparably more solemn. Sure we are—the Church has ruled it—that Wilfrid was unjustly used; and if ever he grew irritable, if ever out of a human self-love or a mere jealousy for his rights he unnecessarily thwarted St. Theodore's reforms, we doubt not he repented of it humbly. We have the archbishop's own confession that on *his* side there was temper, and angry zeal, and a respect of persons; and the *holy* primate humbled himself to his adversary and

made reparation for the wrong, so far as lay in his power. How then shall we, even in writing, set them one against the other, when they reign together now? May they intercede for us their fallen children in the faith!

But let us follow the fortunes of Egfrid and Ermenburga. It was in no spirit of unmanly exultation that the ancients dwelt on the disastrous lives or untimely ends of the powerful men of this world, who in their wantonness persecuted the catholic Church. They amassed such melancholy judgments and condensed them into one dark chronicle, by way of solemn consolation to themselves and awe-inspiring admonition to the world. They regarded such fearful interventions of Providence as forming a perpetual comment on our blessed Lord's promise to be with His Church: it was a pious act to collect them together; they formed a kind of theology in themselves. But while we proceed to tell how like a judgment was Egfrid's doom, shall we number him among the persecutors? It is hard to do so. William of Malmesbury knew not whether to say good or evil of king Egfrid; how much more then should we suspend our judgment! What could be more atrocious than his persecution of St. Wilfrid, or more barbarous than the sufferings which he inflicted on him? And of a piece with this barbarity were his inhuman ravages in Ireland and among the Picts. Yet, on the other hand, he was the munificent patron of St. Benedict Biscop; he it was who endowed the noble monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and who, out of reverence for St. Peter's chair, asked a confirmation of their charters from the Holy See: and further, he was the friend of St. Cuthbert, and in *many things* followed his counsels. It would have been *well for him* had he followed the last counsel the

bishop of Lindisfarne ever gave him, when he besought him not to invade the Picts. In the year 684 Egfrid, provoked by some hostilities, the nature of which is not recorded, sent an army under Bertus to chastise the Irish : by the king's orders the commission was fulfilled with circumstances of appalling ferocity : neither age nor sex, neither churches nor monasteries were spared by the Northumbrian army : that miserable island, which still pleads against England with an indictment of almost numberless counts, was laid waste with fire and sword, until there rose up to Heaven from the whole land one general curse against the brutal king of Northumberland. The English themselves regarded that curse as answered and fulfilled in Egfrid's fate ; neither were his own subjects slow to connect his persecution of Wilfrid with his subsequent misfortunes. The noise of that awful curse was borne across the breadth of England, and broke the conventual peace of Whitby. The blessed Elfreda had succeeded St. Hilda in the government of the monastery, and she was Egfrid's sister. Grievous it was to her gentle spirit that her brother should perpetrate such shocking cruelties and such daring sacrilege, and a cloud came over her, and she felt inwardly that there was too much cause to fear that that Irish curse would be an answered prayer. On Coquet Island she met St. Cuthbert, and asked him of the future, for she knew how abundantly God had given that holy man the gift of prophecy. From what the bishop said, Elfreda augured the worst, and so it proved. In 685 Egfrid determined to take vengeance on the Picts : with more than a wise foreboding St. Cuthbert warned him to *abstain*. But anger is always infatuated : besides, the *Irish* curse was at his doors, so Egfrid marched across *the border* to his doom.

When Egfrid gave, he gave truly with the bounty of a king. One of his gifts to St. Cuthbert was the 'merry' city of Carlisle, with the region fifteen miles around it. But Carlisle was not merry then. For thither Ermenburga had retired to wait for news of Egfrid from beyond the Solway. That Irish curse—it haunted Ermenburga too: a melancholy presentiment took possession of her, and her spirit was overwhelmed with heaviness. St. Cuthbert went to Carlisle out of charity to comfort the queen; yet what could he say to her when he half knew what was to be the end of all? The day after his arrival, the citizens were fain he should go out to see the city, for it was his own, how goodly it was and how marvellous its walls. The bishop followed where they led him, and by the brink of the Roman fountain it was revealed to him that at that moment Egfrid was defeated and slain. Carlisle might not be safe, if the Picts, flushed with their success, should retaliate, and invade Northumberland. It was Saturday; he bade the queen stay Sunday over and then withdraw. So Egfrid perished; but Ermenburga came to a better end; for when next we read of Cuthbert coming to his city of Carlisle, it was to give the veil to the penitent and widowed queen.

In 685, the year of Egfrid's death, Cedwalla of the West Saxon blood royal, slew Wilfrid's patron, Ethelwalch, and took possession of the kingdom of Sussex. It would appear that he was at this time a pagan, but soon after became a convert to the faith; and was as staunch a friend to Wilfrid as ever Ethelwalch had been. In the year following Cedwalla invaded the Isle of Wight; he was then a catechumen, and he made a *vow that if he was successful, he would consecrate a fourth part both of the land and booty to the service*

of God. In performance of this vow, he made over the fourth to Wilfrid, as the minister of God. But Egfrid's death was likely to open Wilfrid a return to his own diocese ; he therefore resigned his portion of the island to his nephew Bernwine, joining with him a priest named Hiddila to preach and to baptize. The Isle of Wight was the last outpost of paganism, the last to be won to Christ. St. Cedwalla stormed it with his secular power, and under Wilfrid's auspices it was soon brought to capitulate to the mild terms of the Gospel, and to bear the gentle yoke of Christ. It was fitting the great Yorkshire missionary should be chosen to end the conversion of England, by evangelizing that beautiful island. To give the Gospel to the islanders was his last act in those parts. No bishop, for the present, succeeded him at Selsey ; the Church of Sussex became, for a few years, part of the diocese of Winchester.

If it lift the spirits and cheer the heart to have wrought some mighty change in Church or State, a change not mighty only but ennobling, there is something which softens the heart more and soothes it better, and bears to be dwelt on longer, in the joy of having been a fountain of happiness springing up in secret places, and running over upon the endearing ties of private life. The Church has changed the surface of the world, but how much holier and more heavenly is its work when it has come whole and entire to each cottage of the poor man, as entire as though its rights and liberties were wholly his and only his ! Cedwalla gave to Wilfrid the town of Paganham in Sussex, and Wilfrid had some touching freedoms granted to the people of his town, that no castle should be built there, no tax laid upon the people for the mending of the bridges, and no conscription for the army : "and I Cedwalla," so runs the

charter, "for a further confirmation hereof, have put a turf of the said ground upon the holy Altar of our Saviour, and by reason of my ignorance in writing my name, I have expressed and subscribed the sign of the Holy Cross." For many a year how many a mouth blessed Wilfrid in the little town of Paganham ! When the lights twinkled in the windows on a winter's night, to a passing traveller those straggling streets of Paganham might look like any other town ; but it was not so : the Church had touched the town, and a very chrism of pure and simple-mannered happiness was out-poured upon it. No stern castle frowned with its deep machicolations from the summit of the hill, but the sheep browsed there, and the children played there, and there were the blue sky above, and the sweet unhindered breezes. No rude retainers, no debauched soldiers spread dismay and sin among the peaceable inhabitants ; no unmannerly officers of the king raised cruel levies for the bridges which the swollen brooks had forced away in the last rains ; and the young men followed the plough and washed the sheep, and married early, and so had married sons to give a home to their grey hairs, and all because youths were not pressed for the royal army. What deep, yet hardly conscious happiness—for happiness is not deep when it is conscious—was there by the fire-sides of Paganham ; and had you seen the children playing on the hill, where the castle *would* have been and was not, and had asked their Christian names, how many, think you, would have answered—Wilfrid ? Not a few.

The life of the great archbishop of Canterbury was now drawing to a close. He had been primate for nineteen years ; eighteen had been spent in holy strenuousness, in unwearied care of the Churches, in the pain-

ful and difficult restoration of all good things decayed. Fourscore and four years pressed upon him, and it was time he should set his house in order. Blessed Saint ! a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, no mean city, he had been a Paul to us, and did great things for our nation, the love of Christ making even sweet to him the rough ways and indocile tempers of us distant islanders. But now he bethought him of the past ; and what had happened between Wilfrid and himself did not seem to be all that it should have been ; the approach of death threw a different light upon things. Most of all was he struck with that untiring, self-forgetting energy which, when Wilfrid might no more edify the Church as a ruler, constrained him to found new Churches as a missionary : such an outpouring of strong love to God and His Christ surely betokened God's Spirit in His servant. Perhaps to an Oriental—yet Orientals can be untiring too—such a display of Saxon earnestness was something astonishing. Theodore might have seen, or deemed he saw, asperity in Wilfrid, a temper apt to take fire at slights, a mind obstinate and unable to forego its own resolutions ; yet nowhere had he seen dejection, ease, languor, sullenness. Stay it where you would, stop this vent or that, still Wilfrid's zeal burst forth, and flowed where it could, as readily, generously, and purely as though all vents were equally natural to it, and there had been none to meddle with its first chosen course. And the more the archbishop thought, the more he wondered ; and the more he wondered, the more he loved. It was the year St. Cuthbert died, 687, in every way a memorable year ; Wilfrid was in Sussex when he was surprised by a summons from the archbishop, desiring him to meet him with bishop Erconwald in London. To *these two prelates St. Theodore made a general confes-*

sion,<sup>8</sup> "acknowledging withal that the thing which caused in his mind the sharpest remorse, was his injustice against the holy bishop Wilfrid, in that he had partly by open endeavours procured, or by secret connivance permitted him to be despoiled of his bishopric against the ecclesiastical canons. 'And because,' said he, 'I am by a warning from Heaven, and my frequent infirmities, admonished that my death will not be delayed beyond next year,<sup>9</sup> I beseech you, O holy bishop Wilfrid, mildly to forgive me my fault, and moreover to take upon you the charge of my archbishopric : for I do not know any one of the English nation so capable of it, considering the eminence of your learning, and skill in the ecclesiastical laws of Rome. As for myself, I will, by God's grace, for the future be very diligent to wipe out all old offences by my care to perform all good offices ; and among the rest, I will endeavour by my intercession, and all the authority I have, to reconcile to you all the princes who have hitherto been your persecutors.' St. Wilfrid answered the archbishop with all meekness, as became so holy a person ; but to accept of the archbishopric without the order and decree of a national council he would by no means consent. St. Theodore, notwithstanding, used his utmost endeavours to obtain his compliance in this point, but in vain. Wilfrid's reply was, 'May God and St. Peter pardon you all our differences : I will always pray for you as your friend. Send letters to your friends, that they may restore to me part of my possessions, according to the decree of the Holy See. The choice of a successor in your see will be afterwards considered in a proper assembly.'"

<sup>8</sup> Such seems to be the import of William of Malmesbury's language, iii. de Pont. Cressy's Tr.

<sup>9</sup> He did not die till September 19, 690.

Surely never was there a man less ambitious than Wilfrid. With what honorable triumph might he now have mounted the throne of Canterbury, as coadjutor to an old man of fourscore and four years ! What a prospect of usefulness, what a magnificent field for carrying out the great work he had begun, of thoroughly romanizing the Saxon Church ! Was it then the expectation of fresh fatigues that daunted him ? Wilfrid was not a man to be scared by peril or by toil. Besides, he would have but to carry out and fulfil what Theodore had already in great measure executed. No ! it was simply this ; Wilfrid was a Saint, and, as such, he wanted the appetite for dignities. The thirst for usefulness never takes that shape among the Saints : it is the mark of an ordinary Christian ; for to do good in high places is indeed to do good, but it is the lowest way, for it is not where Christ did it ; the highest way of usefulness is in holy poverty and Christlike abasement, and is only spiritually discernible. It is good for a heart to desire high place that it may serve the Lord, but thereof in the end cometh not seldom a burdened conscience and a lukewarm spirit. To pray against having dignities is a sure way to have room given to be useful, room for such secret operation as resembles the hidden strength of daily Providence, room for such a life as shall through grace in its poor measure be a copy of the Three and Thirty Years.

Besides which, Wilfrid loved his Yorkshiremen ; he loved his monks of Ripon and of Hexham. There God had called him ; thence the iniquity of men had driven him away. The Church suffered in him ; in his eclipse Rome's honor was overshadowed too ; it was better for *the Church*, it was a more notable victory of principle, *that he should be reinstated in the north, than that he*

should sit in St. Augustine's chair. But even here how edifying is his humility! He only requests to be restored to part of his possessions; yet the Roman decree went beyond this; it authorized the expulsion of the intruding bishops: Wilfrid's suffragans were to have his approval first: but charity seeketh not her own. Again, St. Gregory had given metropolitan honors to York; they had been lost in the Scotch succession at Lindisfarne. Wilfrid knew of this,—nay more, the power of Canterbury unjustly used had galled him fearfully: yet even at Rome he never sought a fresh grant of this useful dignity. York had no archbishop for forty-six years more yet, when Egbert, Alcuin's master, retrieved the ancient honors of the see. Surely all this abstinence from dignities, this withholding of just claims, is a token of an unworldly spirit. Historians have expressed surprise at the personal abasement of the Saints, and their *arrogance* where the rights of the Church are concerned: craft and hypocrisy, every evil quality has been tortured to give up the meaning of the riddle, yet has it remained a riddle still. O the stupidity of earthly wisdom, how is she a poor blindfold thing walking the courts of the sanctuary and the alleys of the cloister in an ill-mannered and ungainly way, like a misbehaving intruder in a sphere above his vulgar birth!

St. Theodore, according to his promise, wrote letters to king Alfrid, and also the abbess Elfleda, who had unhappily inherited St. Hilda's dislike of Wilfrid. His letter to Ethelred, the Mercian king, who had treated our Saint with such royal ingratitude, has been preserved both by Eddi and William of Malmesbury, and runs thus:<sup>1</sup> "Your admirable sanctity, my beloved son,

<sup>1</sup> Cressy, xix. 10.

may hereby take notice that a perfect reconciliation is made between myself and the venerable bishop Wilfrid. Therefore I do admonish you, and in the love of Christ require, that you would still continue, as you have hitherto done,<sup>2</sup> your protection of him, who these many years has been despoiled of his revenues, and forced to live among pagans, in the conversion of whom he has served our Lord with great effect. Therefore, I, Theodore, humble bishop, do now in my decrepit age, make this request unto you, desiring the same which the apostle's authority recommends, touching a holy bishop who has so long a time possessed his soul in patience, and in imitation of Christ our head with all humility and meekness expects an end of so many injuries done him. Moreover, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me enjoy the comfort of seeing your face most desirable to me, and let not a journey for that purpose seem burdensome to you, that my soul may bless you before I die. Beloved son, perform the request I have made you in behalf of the said holy bishop, and be assured that if you obey your father who is shortly to depart out of this world, you will reap great profit to your soul by it. Farewell." St. Ethelred,—for he, too, was a Saint, great as king of Mercia, but greater far as monk of Bardney, in that a cowl is a holier thing than a crown,—St. Ethelred received Wilfrid with honor and hospitality, nor can we doubt that the blessed king followed St. Theodore's example, and humbled himself to confess his former fault. He restored to Wilfrid all those Benedictine houses which he had founded in Mercia, with their lands and privileges intact, and then

<sup>2</sup> St. Theodore was probably ignorant of Ethelred's ingratitude, for Wilfrid was not a man to publish his wrongs.

bid him God speed as the bishop of York went to his ancient diocese, now doubly dear to the returning exile.

On the throne of Northumberland sat his old friend and first patron Alfrid. But Alfrid was a changed man. It was not so much that exile and adversity had altered him, though they are bad nurseries for a king, unless they make him into a Saint. Alfrid was now called the Wise: he had taken to book-learning during his exile, and his heart was none the better for the improvement of his head. It seldom is. Doubtless, too, in the famous schools of Ireland, the head-quarters of Celtic literature, he had lost some of his former reverence for Rome; and that is always a moral loss, as well as an error in opinion. There is a kind and degree of knowledge not uncommon among the great ones of the earth, which, when carried to the utmost, has no tendency to enlarge the heart or elevate the temper of a man; it is what is usually called statesmanship: at best a far-seeing, discreet craft, but essentially heartless and illiberal, and, as being heartless, continually deluding and over-reaching itself. So far as the Church is concerned, this poor statesmanship operates in checking great reforms, and quenching ardent outbreaks of zeal, and in filling prelatures with barely respectable mediocrity, lest high principle and a keen intellect should be troublesome and interfering. It has a mortal dread of Dunstons, and of Anselms, and of Becket; and well it may, for they are ever too much for it. This same prudent state-craft has been some centuries hard at work to strangle the spirit St. Ignatius Loyola left on earth; but it only grows more *vital every day*, because truth is on its side, and noble-mindedness, and heavenly principle, and marvellous

sanctity. Probably, therefore, Alfrid, in the shallow depths of his Celtic state-craft, saw that Wilfrid was not the kind of prelate that would suit his new views, nor the kind of man to let a crowned intellectualist experimentalize upon the Church. However, from whatever cause, Alfrid was an altered man, and from the first the alteration might have been detected even under the surface of a kindly welcome : for he did not give Wilfrid his see back at once ; there was a hesitation for which no cause is assigned. He put him in immediate possession of his abbey at Hexham ; and then, after an interval, restored the monastery of Ripon and the see of York. St. Bosa and St. John of Beverley retired in peacefulness, and out of obedience to St. Theodore's letter and the Roman decree. St. Cuthbert's secession and speedy death left the see of Lindisfarne also to Wilfrid's administration, until Eadbert was consecrated to it ; Wilfrid voluntarily relinquishing it in order to carry out, in a canonical way, the project of St. Theodore to multiply bishoprics.

Once more, then, is Wilfrid on the throne of York, once more in the valley of the Tyne, and by the dark silent waters of the Nid, once more visiting, preaching, confirming. There was many a monk both at Hexham and at Ripon who had prayed for the return of their father in the Lord. Wilfrid had trained them ; they had been brought up in his system ; they had come to think,—and not altogether wrongly,—that the welfare of the Northumbrian Church was bound up with the welfare of the holy bishop ; not altogether wrongly—for, though it be true that in Wilfrid's absence there was all the outward, active show of a Church ; though Saints, canonized Saints, filled the sees ; though the archbishop of Canterbury actually

held synods north of the Tyne; though there was constant doing and undoing, partitioning and repartitioning, change upon change; yet, for all that, we cannot find that the Church in the north was making way. St. Cuthbert's prayers were rising up from that wave-beaten spot of green, treeless turf, which hung on the coast of Northumberland; doubtless his merits were amassing treasures for the northern Church in years to come. Blessed ascetic that he was! who shall count the debt the men of Durham owe to him? Forgotten, as many catholic things are, the poor of that seven-hilled city in the north have yet an affectionate remembrance of the wonder-working Cuthbert, and his strange wandering relics. Still the Church does not seem just then to have made any real advances; the monastic system does not seem to have spread or gained strength or fresh spirituality; and, after all, the flourishing state of monkery is the safest test of real church reform. Was it that the blessing was suspended, and that even the saintly intruders into St. Wilfrid's see worked at a disadvantage, as working against Rome, and without the Apostolic benediction? The later history of this insular Church would seem to shew that the absence of that benediction is almost a blight: it stunts all growths, though it may not cause absolute sterility; it is thus that catholic churches decay and are transformed into pusillanimous communities. If it were that the loss of Rome's blessing was really keeping back the northern Church, then we may understand how it was that the Church *did* make way in one place, and in one place only,—at the abbeys of Wearmouth and of Jarrow: for there was the presence of St. Benedict Biscop, who so honored Rome, and with such tender devotion loved that sacred place, that, in spite of

all the perils both by land and sea, five weary pilgrimages hardly satisfied his ardent feelings towards the Holy City. Where he was, therefore, the Church might well flourish ; and he died while Wilfrid still ruled the Church of York. Strange to say, there is no record that these two Saints, doing the very same work, and filled with the very same spirit, ever met again after their cold parting in the streets of Lyons years ago, when Eddi, who could find nothing to blame about either, alluded, in his simple way, to Paul and Barnabas. The history of the five years of Wilfrid's peaceful rule are known in Heaven, but they are not chronicled on earth. So it mostly is : our business is to give the reader a tiresome string of facts, of jarrings, feuds and fightings, a very lifeless narrative ; yet the inner life, the life which makes the Saint an object of reverence and love,—this we are obliged to divine in our own rude way, and how unsatisfactory it is ! How little do we approach towards getting or giving an idea of what a Saint is, a just man canonized by the devotion of catholic generations ! Yet such a mass of facts and dates is not altogether secular ; there is edification in it ; that tarnished, common-place outside of things,—is it not the very selfsame tyranny under which we live ourselves to-day and to-morrow, and our sons shall live in morrows yet to come ? And Wilfrid, and a host of men such as he, sanctified themselves by such means as are open to ourselves ; and is there not edification in the vivid picturing of this plain fact unto ourselves,—edification haply as great as if we had to tell of inward struggles, heights of contemplation won, traits of ascetic humility and love, such as *Cassian* had to tell, or such as the monks of *La Trappe* fed upon in those old lives which make the

columns of Rosweide such a sweet treasure and endless recreation to a catholic mind ?

It was the year 691. Alfrid the Wise had now made trial of his old friend Wilfrid ; it was clear he was not the sort of man for him. Wisdom like Alfrid's is always beginning : statesmanship has nothing to do with growths : inquiries, commissions, projects, changes, reversals, re-organizations, and all manner of half-work, — statesmanship is competent to nothing more ; and this was Alfrid's line. He could not wait to see how things answered ; he created a public opinion, and then he had to feed it, and it is a hungry monster. Change of ministry, sessions, and acts of parliament,—he had not carrion of this sort ready at his hand ; but there was much which he could do. There was a system of things for him to attack, and Wilfrid to be got rid of ; indeed, that was only one work under two names, for Wilfrid was the soul of the system. Alfrid looked around him in the plenitude of his little wisdom, and he said, as gravely as might be, Of what good is the monastery of Ripon ? Why, to Alfrid of absolutely none ; but it might be to others. But when a king asks a question, his tone of voice answers it affirmatively or negatively. Ripon was of no good ; the Witan shook their heads, and Ripon's fate was sealed. Something more energetic than prayer, fast, and vigil, must be had, and the revenues of those Benedictine drones, who did nothing but act the romance of living Christlike lives, must be applied—it is a pity Alfrid had not some mechanical improvement at hand—to a bishopric. True, there was the same awkward heavenliness about a bishopric ; yet there was *something visible*, and that is an immense comfort to the world which has not faith. Then, if they had

bishopric, they must not have such impracticable men as Wilfrid. Settled, therefore, it is, that Ripon shall be secularized, shall have a bishop, and that that bishop shall be Eadhed. But Wilfrid objected to Alfrid's church views ; if a bishop were wanted there ever so much, it would be an evil precedent to suffer a king to create sees, spoil churches, and make experiments upon monasteries. But Alfrid had not quite the same power as the notorious Tudor, the great empiric in that way ; Wilfrid would not give way, and he had law, equity, and Rome so completely on his side, that Alfrid was obliged to cast about for some more available handle against the bishop. His statesmanship stood him in good stead, for he hit upon an expedient which served his turn exactly. Wilfrid obeyed and carried out the rules St. Theodore had passed for the government of the Northumbrian Church prior to Wilfrid's expulsion, and those also enacted subsequently, when Theodore and Wilfrid had been reconciled. But such decrees as were made in the intervening time Wilfrid took no notice of : St. Theodore's own confession, no less than the decree of Rome, had absolutely annulled them. But Theodore was dead, so no speedy appeal to him would clear Wilfrid ; and it was not hard for the royal statesman so to color things as to make it appear that Wilfrid had contumaciously refused to acknowledge the metropolitan jurisdiction of Canterbury. Without wearying the reader with the details of all the trickery, it is enough to say, that the matter ended in Wilfrid's exile once again. His heart was as strong as ever, though his years were multiplied ; he would have nothing to do with kingly *interference* in matters spiritual, so the lord abbot of *Ripon* took up his crosier, with his old, unfailing cheerfulness, and marched out of Alfrid's kingdom.

Wilfrid had but one want on earth, and that was hard work. It mattered not where he was, nor in what guise, provided only he was working for Christ. As an honored bishop in his own vast diocese, as the lord abbot of an extensive filiation of monasteries from the Tyne to the Nen, from the Ure to the Welland, as missionary among the rude Frisons, as a fisherman by the sea-side, and among the souls of Sussex, in chapter and in synod, in the pulpit and confessional, rebuking kings in palaces, and confirming children in villages,—it mattered not how or where, still, be it Christ's work, and Wilfrid's heart was in it, laboring with such a right good will, and such an energy of contentment, as is refreshing to behold, for all it is so humbling to us beholders. Wilfrid now found work in Mercia. St. Theodore's letter had quite disabused St. Ethelred's mind; he received the exiled bishop with open arms, and would have established him in one of the Mercian sees if he could. Putta had just died, but Tistellus had this same year been consecrated in his room, so that the see of Hereford was full; and for a year Wilfrid was obliged to live in ascetic seclusion, or in training and leading forward king Ethelred to those heights of Christian perfection which he afterwards attained. But his retirement was of no long duration. The next year, 692, Seculph, the bishop of Lichfield, died, and Wilfrid was appointed to the vacant see. Once St. Chad had entered into his labors; now he, by a strange revolution, was the successor of St. Chad. Others say, with less show of authority, that Leicester was the new diocese of Wilfrid, divided from Lichfield at Seculph's death. Leicester certainly does appear to have once *been the seat of a bishop*, and it is much to be desired *that it were so now*; but we incline to think St. Wi

frid's new see was Lichfield, and not Leicester.<sup>3</sup> In this same year we find Wilfrid ordaining the blessed Ostfor as coadjutor to Bosil bishop of Worcester, who was broken with age and many infirmities. Wilfrid's excuse for thus consecrating bishops was the vacancy of the see of Canterbury, St. Theodore being dead, and St. Bertwald not yet appointed. So, for twelve whole years, honored and beloved, Wilfrid dwelt among the Mercians, and for eleven years held peaceable possession of the see of Lichfield. Need we conjecture how his time was spent? Secret austerities dictated by the spirit of penance which shone forth so eminently in the humble-minded bishop, and outward indefatigable labors for the diocese and Mercian monasteries,—these were the two sides of Wilfrid's life. His will grew to be more and more conformed to the Will of God; his faith, his hope, his love gained new accessions daily through the works of penitence and charity; doubtless, too, raptures in prayer and extasies at mass, and gifts of strange fore-knowledge and celestial visions might be added: we know not: he lived the life of a Saint, therefore he was growing in sanctity day by day.

In 697 or 8, Wilfrid performed an episcopal act, which to him would be of a most touching nature, for it brought him once more into contact with his poor wild Frisons. Swibert had been one of his own subjects, a monk somewhere on the Scottish border. He was destined to be the apostle of Westphalia. In 690, he had sailed into Friesland, one of the mystic twelve, of whom St. Willebrord was the head. They landed at the mouth of the Rhine, the old scene of

<sup>3</sup> However, see Carte and Wharton, ap. Peck, History of Stamford, ii. 36.

Wilfrid's labors; and soon after pope Sergius had consecrated Willebrord archbishop of Utrecht, Swibert was sent into England to be ordained a regionary bishop, that is, without any fixed see. The chair of Canterbury was vacant: besides which, to whom would he go more naturally than to his old diocesan, whose name yet lingered among the rough people of the Rhenish swamps? He received, therefore, his consecration from Wilfrid; and well may we imagine the interesting conversations which would pass between the old and young bishop about the converted Frisons; well may we suppose that Swibert would seek for counsel from the lips of such a tried and able missionary as Wilfrid, one, too, who knew the temper and the ways of the kind-hearted savages of Friesland.

But from this happy scene of tranquil labor, our attention is now called to a sad scene of fraud and violence, a masterpiece of Alfrid's statesmanship: for worldly wisdom cannot long succeed unless it allies itself with wickedness; no difficult matter when there is such natural affinity between them. The new primate was St. Bertwald: he had been a monk at Glas-tonbury, and afterwards at Reculver, a holy contemplative, who edified the Saxon Church from his high place for seven and thirty years of austere living. He was a scholar, too, but does not seem to have possessed either the erudition of St. Theodore, or his talent for governing. The first years of his primacy were in great measure occupied by the Church and kingdom of Kent, which had fallen into a lamentable state of tumult and misrule in the years which preceded the reign of Withred. Even after the Synod of Becan-celde, much was to be done in carrying out his decrees, and years elapsed before the archbishop could actively

interfere in the ecclesiastical affairs of the north. The time and leisure came at last : it were better the holy man had been detained in Kent.

By some means or other, and probably in great measure by false representations, (for a lie saves statesmanship much troublesome ingenuity,) Alfrid gained St. Bertwald to his side, and inspired him with a jealousy and dislike of Wilfrid. The good bishop of York had been busy consoling Ethelred for the loss of his queen, king Egfrid's sister, who had been inhumanly murdered by the people of Lincoln and Nottingham : he had been witness, too, to a wondrous scene in the great abbey of Ely, the disinterring of St. Etheldreda by St. Sexburga, her sister and successor ; and it is chiefly on his testimony that the Church has received the pious belief of the incorruption of the blessed virgin's flesh. How wonderful a scene was that ! Go where we will, while Wilfrid is alive, and in almost all things which concern the Church, the bishop of York has a work to do : his biography is, if we except the internal regimen of the see of Canterbury, the history of the Saxon Church in his day. Meanwhile, Alfrid could not let him alone ; for a characteristic of statesmanship, the only feature about it which is not simply utilitarian, is an intense, pains-taking hatred of high principle. St. Bertwald, it appears, was anxious to execute the pope's decrees ; but Alfrid managed to procrastinate, and ultimately to prejudice the archbishop against Wilfrid. "As for Wilfrid," says the author of the *Series Wilfridiana*,<sup>4</sup> "after he had now a long time exercised his office of a bishop up and down Mercia, in 703, at the desire of king Alfrid, Bertwald the archbishop called a general

<sup>4</sup> Ap. Peck, ii. 38.

council of the bishops of all Britain to meet at Nestre-field, five miles north of Ripon, at which council Wilfrid was ordered to appear, and assurance given him, that, if he could prove he was really injured, he should have all imaginable reparation made for the wrong that he complained was done him. Well : he came, but met with none of the justice they promised him. For some bishops, indulging the king's humor, began presently to exasperate Wilfrid with false calumnies, and to provoke him with all the contradictions they were able. And when they could not prove what they objected with any show of reason, they at last added to their objections, that he would not submit a tittle to the decrees of archbishop Theodore. To whom answering, 'I did submit,' said he, 'to those decrees of Theodore which he promulged in peace, and with a canonical authority, and will in every particular obey them. Nevertheless, tell me how it is, that for two and twenty years ye can be disobedient to the letters sent from the Apostolic See, and so vehemently accuse me because I do not receive those institutions of Theodore which he did not compose by a canonical authority, but, as you yourselves very well know, by the dictates of discord.' Wilfrid, then, did not reckon they did him such an injury by dividing his bishopric into more sees, as that those prelates, to wit, Bosa and John, should exercise the episcopal function, who, according to Theodore's decree, indeed, but against Wilfrid's consent, (he being then unjustly banished,) were promoted to that high honor. For the Roman bishop's decree was that that diocese, being so large and wide, should be parted into more sees ; but that, nevertheless, was not to be done by mere archiepiscopal authority, but a council solemnly assembled, they being first deposed

who, in Wilfrid's absence, were, contrary to the canons, ordained bishops. This council, therefore, opposed itself to the Apostolic See, not for that it would part the diocese of York, but would itself confirm it to those bishops who held it by a violent and unjust intrusion. Meantime, a great many high words, without any reason in them, being retorted among them with a noise confused enough, a young man, belonging to the court, and well-known to Wilfrid, thrust himself into the crowd, and coming up to him, acquainted him with the meaning of the council's being in such a tumult. 'They design nothing,' said he, 'but to cozen you, by getting you, first of all, to set your own hand to stand to their judgments, whatever they decree; so that when you are once tied down by the band of confinement, you may never be able to alter anything afterwards; forasmuch as the result of their decree will be this: That you forfeit all that you at any time held in lands, bishoprics, monasteries, or any other quality, in the kingdom of the Northumbrians; and if you have procured anything in Mercia under king Ethelred, that you be forced to relinquish all that, by surrendering the whole to the archbishop, to be collated by him on whom he pleases: and lastly, that, by your own subscription, you be degraded from the honor of a bishop.'

"Understanding all this, when the bishops urged him to subscribe, Wilfrid stoutly and constantly refused to do so. But whom they could not trick by cunning, they presently attempted to oppress by force. Wherefore they passed sentence, that he should be divested of *all that he had*, and not hold so much as the smallest *portion of any one little house or monastery, either in the kingdom of the Northumbrians or of the Mercians.*

Nevertheless, when this resolution was divulged, his very enemies were seized with horror at the same, saying, that it was an impious thing, that a person every-way honorable should, without any certain crime being fixed on him, be stripped of all that he had. Whereupon the king and the archbishop, being desired by some about them, granted him the monastery which he had erected at Ripon, but on this condition, that he should there quietly sit down, and without the king's licence never go out of the bounds of that house, or any longer administer the office of a bishop, but that of himself he should renounce his rank of honor, and confirm it with the testimony of his own subscription. But the synod now demanding of him to give up his right, he acted like a most resolute prelate ; for he would not with one word spoil the labors of many years, and condemn the doctrine and rites which by his teaching the province had received." But let the Saint speak for himself, for his speech is given us by Eddi, and a noble one it is, and the precentor says that the old man of seventy delivered it with an intrepid voice : "Wherefore would ye compel me to turn against myself this sword of direful calamity, the subscription of my own condemnation ? Unworthy though I am, I have now borne the name of bishop these forty years, and shall I without any guilt make myself a suspected person now ? Since the first fathers whom holy Gregory sent, was not I the first to root out the evil plants of Scottish planting, and bring the Northumbrians back to the Easter and the tonsure of the Holy See ? Was I not the first to teach you how to sing like those of old, with double choirs, responsories, and antiphons ; and the very first to bring into these *parts the monastic rule of the holy father Benedict ? And now must I condemn myself, conscious as I am of*

no iniquity? I appeal with all confidence to the Apostolic See : let the man who wishes to depose me accompany me thither to that judgment. Let the learned men of Rome know for what fault I am to be degraded before I consent thereto."<sup>5</sup>

Time was when an appeal to Rome had elicited nothing but jeers from the Northumbrian court. But Rome's power, the length and strength of her arm, were better known now : crowned cowards quailed before the eye of the old man in his white cassock on the Vatican. It was hatred now, baffled spite, outwitted statesmanship, which broke forth with all its puerile fury, when the name of Rome was pronounced aloud by that old and outworn bishop. Surely the baseness and the turpitude of this wicked council need no comment ; yet it is useful to observe that the erastian bishops out-heroded Herod, they made their decree stronger than Alfrid wanted it, and so baffled him : thus it always is, the more a man foregoes his nature or betrays his office, the viler he becomes ; a wicked bishop becomes a very Satan : the lay nobles cry out against the blind passion of the decree. Alfrid surely might be disappointed : that council was to have been a master-piece, but lo ! it was a failure : and as to Bertwald, with what heart he went to vespers that evening we cannot tell. Deeply had Alfrid humbled him ; statesmanship had been too much for the pious contemplative. He would have been happier that night had he been a simple monk in his old cell at Reculver.

One thing, however, Bertwald did. Alfrid was for using violence, the only refuge of disconcerted statesmanship ; but the name of Rome had been pronounced, and the archbishop was resolute that Wilfrid should go forth

<sup>5</sup> Eddi in Mabill. Act. Ben.

free. But the zeal of adulation has no bounds ; it becomes grotesque. The erastian bishops probably perceived how Alfrid the Wise was vexed because truth, simplicity, and firmness had been too much for him ; and they promulged a decree excommunicating Wilfrid and his adherents. Nay, to such a disgraceful excess did their spite proceed, that if any of Wilfrid's abbots or monks sat at table and blessed the food set before him by signing the cross over it, they threw what he left to the dogs, and washed the vessels out of which he ate with the same ceremony as if they were polluted things ! Meanwhile, Wilfrid retired into Mercia, and related to St. Ethelred the proceedings of this tumultuous synod : the king was true to Wilfrid ; he expressed the greatest indignation and disgust at what had happened, and so far as he was concerned, pledged himself to keep Wilfrid's abbeys for him till his return.

What wonderful faith St. Wilfrid had in Rome ! What indomitable energy in himself ! The old Saxon bishop with threescore and ten years upon his back, and well-nigh twenty of laborious exile—he started for Rome with all the freshness of his impatient youth when first liberated from the Kentish court. His light burned clear to the last ; his had been a life of pure-thoughted abstinence, and therefore he had no old age. What a help cheerfulness is in religion, a real, genuine, unaffected mirth of heart, dwelling in its own sunshine, pure, humble, loving, and outpouring itself in all manner of courtesy and considerateness upon all who come within its reach. There is no magnanimity where there is not cheerfulness. Melancholy may be meditative and touching, but it cannot be magnanimous. There is something quite heroic about Wilfrid's cheerfulness ; it was the staff he walked with all his life long, up hill

and down, for his had been an uneven road ; it was the staff the old pilgrim leaned upon as he went forth all that long way to Rome. Why was it that no one ever heard a word from Wilfrid's lips of querulous complaint, of accusation of his enemies ? Why was it that in England, abroad, even before the Roman synods, the bishop was silent about his slanderers, and kept meekly to a bare defence of himself ? Why was it, but that he was a cheerful man, and hated sin with such a thorough hatred that he would not keep it in his mind to brood upon, even when it had so nearly concerned himself ? A man can do no work who is not cheerful ; and cheerfulness only flows from one fountain, an ascetic life. Shamefaced confession, daily examination of conscience, the interruption of canonical hours, fasting, watching, endurance of cold, voluntary discomforts, are all harsh-sounding words, and to worldly ears dead, unhelpful formalities ; yet of these comes cheerfulness. Elastic spirits spring from an examined conscience ; a disencumbered mind to think of and act for our neighbours is soon the growth of sacramental confession, which alone is our safeguard against morbid self-inspection. Love of God is the child of fasting, and to watch and to be cold gives a man such an on-looking disposition that he bursts easily from the fretting trammels and effeminate retardments of his "old self," which he durst not leave behind were he not conscious that he was doing works of penance which sufficiently provide for the memory of the past, for all such works cry *Amplius lava me* at all hours of the day. Thus, while on the modern system religion becomes a weak, delicate, sickly, timorous unnerving psychology, by the help of catholic austerities it is a keen, vigorous, masculine, self-forgetting, loving, hard-working, bright-faced, and light-hearted thing, de-

lightful to contemplate, as if it were in its measure a visible disclosure of the mercy and the justice of Him whose grace it is. But where is Christ in all this? a man may say. Everywhere; if men would know what it is to love Christ, they must read the lives of the austere Saints; they threw themselves out of themselves into Him, and none but ascetics can do so. The love of God is the keeping of His commandments; where then is that love when those commandments are decried as bondage? The work of a Christian is the bearing of a Cross; how is that work done when the Cross is laid aside? Scanty churches, few priests, children uneducated, poor unrelieved, colonies unevangelized, the bridegroom gone, and yet no fasting! St. Wilfrid might have asked, where is Christ in all this? When the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world, we shall learn that the love of Christ is other than we deemed it. The world a Cross, we, each one separately, nailed thereon, or with manful hands in the act of nailing ourselves thereto, so that the world and we together make up the figure of a living Crucifix,—is this the fashion of our lives? If not, let us fear God, and make haste along our way, asking of the Saints, whose lives were of such guise as that, how we may at length, not fear only, but likewise learn to love, and in the end win such a hope that we may have boldness even amid the affrighting pomp of Doomsday.

With a right merry heart and joyous trust, Wilfrid went forth to Rome; it was about Christmas when he got there, his third visit and his last. A Greek then sat upon St. Peter's chair, John VI. "Thither, also," we are again quoting the author of the *Series Wilfridiana*, "were reached messengers from Bertwald, the archbishop, with his letters of accusation, humbly requesting

audience to be given them from that most glorious See, concerning the message whereon they were employed. But when pope John VI., with his bishops assembled from all parts, were come to the place where synods were then wont to be held, Wilfrid first presented a schedule of his petition to the synod, praying that the pontiff would vouchsafe to request Ethelred king of the Mercians (by the same instance of authority wherewith his predecessors Agatho, Benedict, and Sergius required it before) that no man might presume, through envy or wicked covetousness, to invade or take from him those monasteries with their appurtenances which were given him by king Ethelred himself, his brother Wulfere, or any other persons whatsoever, for the redemption of their souls. Likewise that he would entreat king Alfrid to fulfil all those things which his own predecessor Agatho had decreed. But if this should perchance seem hard to the king, [How little deserving the Saint's considerate humility!] that the bishopric of the city of York, with the monasteries which he held and were very many, might be bestowed at the pope's pleasure on whom he should think would best govern them; and that only two monasteries, Ripon and Hexham, with all their lands and possessions, be restored to him. Pope John, when he heard these things, thought it necessary to examine what his predecessors had decreed in this affair. What helped to acquit Wilfrid at this time, as Bede himself tells us, was a reading of the acts of the Synod<sup>6</sup> of pope Agatho, held when Wilfrid was the second time at Rome, and sitting in council among the bishops there. For when (as the cause<sup>7</sup> required) the

<sup>6</sup> Against the Monothelites.

<sup>7</sup> Not Wilfrid's cause, but some other business.

acts of that synod were on some certain days read before the nobles and a multitude of others at the pope's command, they came at last to the place where it was written, 'Wilfrid, beloved of God, bishop of the city of York, appealing to the Apostolic See about his own business, and by authority of the same concerning matters certain and uncertain absolved, and set in the seat of judgment, with one hundred and twenty-five other bishops assembled in synod, professed, and with his subscription confirmed the true and catholic faith, for all the north part or islands of Britain and Ireland, which are inhabited by the nations of the English and Britons, together with the Picts and Scots.' When it was read, a great surprise seized the audience, and the reader stopping short, they began to inquire of one another, who that bishop Wilfrid was. Then Boniface, a counsellor of the pope's, and many others who had seen him there in pope Agatho's time, said, that he was the bishop who, being lately accused by his countrymen, was again come thither to be judged by the Apostolic See; who being accused before, said they, and repairing hither, (the cause and controversy of both parties being presently after heard and adjudged,) was pronounced by pope Agatho to have been driven from his bishopric contrary to right, and had in so great esteem by him, that he would needs command him to take his place in a council of bishops which he assembled, as a person of an uncorrupt faith and an upright life. Which being heard, they all, together with the pontiff himself, said, A man of so great authority, who had been a bishop near forty years, ought by no means to be condemned, but being absolved entirely from the crimes whereof he was *accused, should be returned with honor.* Afterwards, *one day, the synod being assembled, they commander*

Wilfrid's party and his accusers, who came from the archbishop, to appear. Whereupon his accusers first said, that bishop Wilfrid contumaciously opposing the canons of Bertwald, archbishop of Canterbury, and all Britain, (although these canons were decreed before a synod,) refused to submit to the same. To the substance of which accusation Wilfrid thus replied: 'I humbly and earnestly beseech your most excellent Holiness, that, condescending to so mean a person as I am, you will be pleased to hear the truth of this matter from me. For I was sitting in council<sup>8</sup> with my own abbots, priests, and deacons, when they sent to me one of the bishops there assembled [*i. e.* with St. Bertwald] to ask me in the king's name, as also in the archbishop's, if I would submit to the sole determination of the archbishop himself, and was ready to comply with every particular he had decreed in his own private judgment, or not? To this I answered the bishop who asked me, It were fitting we should first know what the sentence of his judgment is, before we can declare whether we are ready or no to submit to it. He then affirmed he did not know what it was himself; nor would the archbishop, he said, by revealing it to any of us after any other manner, be willing to make known the full of his resolution, without we first, in open council, with our own hands would freely subscribe, that resolving to obey his sole judgment in all things, and no ways declining it, we will not depart a jot therefrom. I said, I never before now heard that a subscription so strict and full of confinement as this, was insisted upon by any man whatever; that, being

<sup>8</sup> Wilfrid seems here to be relating some stage of the proceedings prior to the iniquitous council at Nestrefield: his silence about that council is only another instance of his humility, self-restraint, and love of his persecutors.

bound as strongly as by an oath, he should promise to perform the decrees made, though requiring impossibilities ; and all this before he might know what they contained. Nevertheless, I replied there, before the assembly, that in all things wherein the archbishop's judgment appeared agreeable to the decrees of the holy fathers, and to precedents and canonical definitions, and in no wise differing from the synod of St. Agatho and the rest of his orthodox successors, we shall be found heartily ready to submit to it.' This tractable answer having produced in the Romans a joyful applause, his accusers were ordered to return home, the bishops saying, that though it was provided by the canons that every accuser who was found faulty in the first article of his charge should be heard no farther, they nevertheless, out of reverence for archbishop Bertwald, would not be wanting, but discuss everything in order thoroughly. Whereupon it came to pass, that within four months after there being held seventy little councils,<sup>9</sup> solely or chiefly upon this account, they had all an end as glorious for Wilfrid, as ignominious for his accusers. In 704, therefore, the pope wrote to the kings Ethelred and Alfrid, and to the archbishop Bertwald, to restore him to his see. The bull which he sent to those kings ran thus :—

“ ‘To the most eminent lords, Ethelred king of the Mercians, and Alfrid king of the provinces of Deira and Bernicia, John the Pope: We rejoice at the accessions, through God's working grace, of your excellent religion ; discerning the fervor of the faith in you, which, the Lord enlightening your souls, you received by the preaching of the Prince of the Apostles, and now

<sup>9</sup> Conciliabula. Eddi Steph.

effectually retain, that a yet better accession may fulfil our joy. But the inextricable dissension of some hath afflicted our soul, and made sad the ears of our fellow-priests and the whole Church, which also, with the Lord's assistance, it behoves us to bring to correction, that not being despisers of the pontifical decrees, but obedient sons, ye may together be approved keepers of the pontifical decrees before the Lord, the Judge of all men. For long ago, when, under our predecessor pope Agatho, of apostolic memory, bishop Wilfrid, coming hither, appealed to the Apostolic See; his adversaries, who then came hither from Theodore, of venerable memory, archbishop of the Church of Canterbury, and from the abbess Hilda, of religious memory, to accuse him, being present, the bishops from divers provinces being with the above-named holy pope here likewise assembled, regularly inquired into the allegations of both parties, and sententially decreed between them: which same sentence his successors, the holy popes our predecessors, thought good to follow. Neither was the prelate Theodore, of venerable memory, (who was sent from this Apostolic See,) ever known afterwards to contradict what was done, or send any farther accusation to this Apostolic See; but rather, as hath appeared, both from what he declared and by the pontific decrees, submitted to that sentence. It were, therefore, with God's assistance, to be prevented, that no dissension be upheld in one place, whilst everywhere else there is a perfect unanimity both of fellow-priests and people. So much we have thought good to premise concerning affairs past. Touching present matters also we have judged proper to make known to your Christian excellencies, that those who have come hither from the said isle of Britain, and brought accusations against

bishop Wilfrid, he afterwards arriving here with his brethren, they have retorted upon his accusers the very things which they accused him of ; whose differences we have for some days procured to be heard before a convention of bishops and priests, who happened to be at present here ; before whom all the particulars whatever, which the parties have either in former or fresh writings brought in charge, or they could here find, or was verbally alleged by them, being carefully discussed, have been brought to our cognition ; till they, the principal persons among whom the contention hath arisen, shall meet together, who, to put an end to all disputes, ought to assemble and sit in council. And, therefore, we admonish Bertwald, prelate of the holy Church of Canterbury, our most reverend brother, (whom, by authority of the Prince of the Apostles, we have confirmed archbishop there,) to call a synod, together with bishop Wilfrid ; and a council being regularly celebrated, that he cause the bishops Bosa and John to come into the synod ; and that he hear what both parties have to say, and consider what they are among themselves willing to agree to ; and if so be that by his management he shall be able to determine this regularly at the synod, he does a grateful thing to us and the parties. But, if it otherwise fall out, let him synodically admonish them, that upon his admonitions each party may consider what things will be most convenient for themselves ; and then let them come together to this Apostolic See, that what hath not hitherto been determined may be debated and decided in a fuller council ; and so they who come in discord may, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, return in peace. Likewise, let every one of them who shall refuse or, what is to be execrated, despise to come, know that he

ought to submit himself to a dejection, and be thrown hence, and not received there by any of the prelates or faithful. For he who hath lived disobedient to Christ his Author, cannot be received among His ministers and disciples. Moreover, let your Christian and royal highnesses, for the fear of God and reverence and peace of the Christian faith, which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples, cause a speedy meeting and concurrence in this affair; that these things, of which, by God's inspiration, we have a thorough insight, may take effect; that, for your religious endeavours of this sort, there may be laid up for you a reward in Heaven, and that Christ being your protector, you may in this world reign safely, and at length enjoy the blessed society of His eternal kingdom. Wherefore, my most dear sons, remember what the most blessed Agatho, and the rest of the prelates of the Roman Church after him, together with us, in one voice, by apostolic authority, have ordained in this same affair. For be he who he will, who with audacious rashness shall despise what we have done, he shall not go unpunished by God, or, being debarred from Heaven, escape without loss. The Most High Grace keep safe your eminences.' ”

Never was there upon earth a tribunal so august as that of Rome! While in the local Churches, party-spirit and factious tumult, the wrath of kings and the strife of prelates, keep all things in effervescence, the patient discernment, the devout tranquillity of deliberation, the unimpassioned disentanglement of truth from falsehood, the kindly suspense, the saintly moderation without respect of persons, the clear-voiced utterance of the decree at last,—how wonderful were all *these things* in the court of Rome! With profoundest

reverence be it spoken, did not this tribunal faintly shadow forth the imperturbed peace, long-suffering, merciful delay yet loving promptitude of the Divine judgments? Earth trembled and was still : for many a century was this true of Rome ; surely it was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Seventy councils held to sift, to balance, to compare, to adjust what might seem a petty strife in a far-off diocese of a little island ! Wilfrid might well have faith in Rome, might well go through all he did to teach his Saxon countrymen the like consoling and reverential trust. The aged Wilfrid—he had *walked* great part of the way to Rome, for all his three-score years and ten : he had walked, at least, from those litora australia of which Eddi speaks ; he had gone *pedestri gressu* over rough and smooth, till he came to the pope's feet, and there he knelt down—fit resting-place, indeed, for a toil-worn Saint. Now he had his journey over again ; but first,—Wilfrid forgot not that,—there were the basilicas and holy places to visit for devotion ; we have particular reasons for knowing that he had a singular love of those two basilicas Sta. Maria Maggiore, and San Paolo, of which last, in better days, the English sovereigns were the keepers, when St. Paul had not been set against St. Peter. Again did Wilfrid, covetous old man ! beg relics to take to his dear England, and purple and silk for the frontals of the altars and the chasubles of the priests ; and ample chasubles (not the mean clipped chasubles of our times) St. Wilfrid's priests no doubt had : he would not be sparing of his silk, for he was given to magnificence, like Hugh of Clugny, or Suger of St. Denys. *Obedient as he was to St. Benedict in most things, Wilfrid would have been a perfect sophist if any one*

had urged holy poverty in Church adornments. Once, again, over rough and smooth, (*per plana et aspera*,) but Eddi does not say *pedestri gressu*, Wilfrid, with his selfsame staff of cheerfulness, trudged like a sturdy pilgrim back to his native land. In years past, St. Theodore had forced a horse upon him, and now pope John had forbidden the cold water at night, and otherwise retrenched the old man's austerities. But Wilfrid endured this, as he did most things, with an on-looking cheerfulness.

The Alps were cleared, and Wilfrid came at last to Meaux. Meaux and its vicinity had long been noted for hospitality to us western islanders. Agneric had received St. Columban as a guest at his seat of Champagne, in Brie, two leagues from Meaux. This was in 610. St. Faro was Agneric's son, and he was made bishop of Meaux in 626, and having peopled his diocese with Saints, earned by his own ascetic life the honors of canonization himself. In was in St. Faro's palace at Meaux that the abbot Adrian spent his winter, while St. Theodore was the guest of Agilbert at Paris. It was to this city of Meaux that Wilfrid came. The stout-hearted old man was manifestly broken with travel; his heart never failed him; indeed his body had been leaning on his spirit this long while; now it could go no further, and the bishop lay down to die. True, he had ridden from Rome this time, but three-score years and ten require an easier seat than a saddle day after day, for many a weary league. Let St. Bede tell the rest;<sup>1</sup> "Passing through France, on his way back to Britain, on a sudden he fell sick, and the distemper increasing, was so

<sup>1</sup> V. 19. Dr. Giles's Translation.

ill that he could not ride, but was carried in his bed. Being thus come to the city of Meaux, in France, he lay four days and nights, as if he had been dead, and only by his faint breathing showed that he had any life in him ; having continued so four days, without meat or drink, speaking or hearing, he at length, on the fifth day, in the morning, as it were awakening out of a dead sleep, sat up in the bed, and opening his eyes, saw numbers of brethren singing and weeping about him, and fetching a sigh, asked where Acca the priest was ? This man, being called, immediately came in, and seeing him thus recovered and able to speak, knelt down, and returned thanks to God, with all the brethren there present. When they had sat awhile, and begun to discourse with much reverence on the heavenly judgments, the bishop ordered the rest to go out for an hour, and spoke to the priest Acca in this manner: ‘An awful vision has now appeared to me, which I wish you to hear and keep secret, till I know how God will please to dispose of me. There stood by me a certain person, remarkable for his white garments, telling me he was Michael the archangel, and said, I am sent to save you from death : for the Lord hath granted you life, through the prayers and tears of the disciples, and the intercession of His Blessed Mother Mary of perpetual virginity ; wherefore I tell you, that you shall now recover from this sickness ; but be ready, for I will return to visit you at the end of four years. But when you come into your country, you shall recover most of the possessions that have been taken from you, and shall end your days in perfect peace.’ The bishop accordingly recovered, at which all persons rejoiced, and setting forward on his journey arrived in Britain.”

Doubtless the cause of St. Wilfrid's revealing this secret vision to St. Acca only, (who had been brought up by St. Bosa, yet now followed Wilfrid,) was partly the blessed Saint's profound humility, and partly his uncertainty whether it might not have been an illusion, and then, if falsified by the event, the knowledge of it might have created in others either profaneness or distrust. Those who receive Divine favors of any sort are usually men little inclined to publish them—even ordinary Christians can understand why this should be. What more humbling, more unspeakably humbling, than an answered prayer? yet the love it stirs breeds, not vocal thanks or hearty utterance, but a breathless hush, because of the Lord's recent nearness to us, or touch upon us.

"Wilfrid," says Eddi, "washed his face and hands with much hilarity," and took some food, and in a few days journeyed to the sea, and, after a prosperous voyage, landed in Kent. St. Bertwald received the papal decrees with becoming reverence, undertook to reverse the harsh judgments of the former synod, and was unfeignedly reconciled to Wilfrid. All this was as it should be. Then there was a regular gathering of Wilfrid's abbots in London, and great rejoicings: this too is refreshing to read of. Then the old man went northwards, not to *King*, but to *Saint*, Ethelred, for he was now a monk at Bardney; Wilfrid had had a hand in this; and when he saw his royal friend, crowned with a catholic tonsure, he wept for joy, and there was kissing and embracing, which Eddi tells us of in a most complacent way; and Kenred, whom Ethelred had *made king*, promised to observe the Roman decrees, and to restore Wilfrid all his abbeys inviolate. And this, too, was as it should be: for Ethelred, when the pope's

letter was given him, received it on his knees, and that, beyond a doubt, had been a lesson from his friend Wilfrid. But Alfrid, the statesman, he was sullen, as most men are when they have been outwitted. Wilfrid sent to him Badwin a priest, and Alufrid the schoolmaster at Ripon: Alfrid received them mildly, and fixed a time when they should come for his answer. He refused to obey the pope's decree, or admit Wilfrid; he was determined to have the best of it to the last. But the statesman, Alfrid the Wise, had never done a sillier thing than disobey the commands of Rome. The pope's letter had ended with a warning, and the warnings of the Church, unheeded, grow into maledictions. The messengers of Wilfrid turned their backs on Driffeld, a village by the river Hull in Yorkshire; and as soon as they were gone, the king was seized with a sore disease, and lost the use of all his limbs. Finding himself at death's door, he sent for the abbesses Elfleda and Edilburga, and confessed his sin in thus malignantly persecuting Wilfrid, in their presence and before other witnesses, adding, "If Wilfrid could have come soon enough to me, on my sending for him, I would immediately have made amends for my offence. For I had vowed to God and St. Peter, if I had got well of this infirmity, to observe all things according to the holy Wilfrid's mind, and the judgment of the Apostolic See. But, as it pleases God I shall die, I require, in the Name of God, whoever succeeds me, to make peace and agreement with bishop Wilfrid for the peace of mine and his own soul." So Alfrid died. Had he thrown his wisdom upon the side of God's Church, what might not this royal scholar *have done for the north*; as it was, his reign left *no trace behind*; he squandered his talents in persecut

ing a bishop, in order to free the state from the salutary restraints of the Church, and the bishop outwitted the scholar in his craft, called in Rome, and Rome beat the king to the ground. The same edifying drama has been enacted over and over again for the instruction of the world ; yet states are slow learners : they die before their nonage is past ; while the Church remains old in years and wisdom, young in power and freshness.

Alfrid died in 705, and Eadulf succeeded him. To him Wilfrid came, accompanied by the king's own son, who appears to have been receiving his education in the monastery of Ripon, sending messengers before him. But the king's counsellors were strong and well : they derided the death-bed repentance of the late monarch ; they deemed his intellect enfeebled by disease. By their advice, Eadulf answered Wilfrid's messengers austere, and said, " I swear by my life, if he does not depart my kingdom in six days' time, as many of his companions as I find shall be put to death." But the malediction in no long while found out Eadulf also. A conspiracy was raised against him by the nobility, for he was a usurper, and he was deposed and slain in two months. Then Osred, Alfrid's son, succeeded ; and St. Bertwald called a council on the Nid, and Wilfrid was there, and Bosa, and John of Beverley, and Eadbert of Lindisfarne, five canonized Saints, at that time enemies : and the archbishop spoke, and said that Rome must be obeyed ; and Bosa, and John, and Eadbert opposed, and Elfreda testified to Alfrid's dying words. St. Wilfrid was humble, and outworn, and he *knew* the number of his days ; and he gave up his *shoprics*, for his battle was won, and he had not fought *it* for himself, but for a principle which that day, on

the banks of the Nid, men bowed to in fear and reverence. And Berectfrid, a great noble, spoke, and said that, in the siege of Bamborough, when they were in straits, and Eadulf's men pressed them hard, they vowed, if they should conquer, to follow Alfrid's dying words, and obey the See of Rome. And Wilfrid asked for his abbeys of Ripon and of Hexham, and would have no more ; and they gave him what he asked. And the adverse bishops kissed one another, and mass was sung by the Nid side, and the communion was not one of form only, but of heart also,—a shadow, yet a truthful shadow, of that unimaginable communion which now is in Heaven between those beatified spirits St. Bertwald, St. Wilfrid, St. Bosa, St. John of Beverley, St. Eadbert, and St. Elfleda ; by whose helpful intercession may we be aided now in the forlornness of our fight !

Wilfrid now prepared himself to die, according to the warning given him by the Captain of the Heavenly Hosts. He appears to have spent his time, as was natural, between the abbeys of Hexham and of Ripon. Sorrow follows joy ; or, as Eddi expresses it, when he has glowingly described the communion of the bishops, *lætitia hujus sæculi luctu miscebitur, et omnis res ad finem respicit*. But one thing remains to be said : we have not alluded to St. Wilfrid's doctrines. The blessed pope, St. Agatho, thought it of importance that Wilfrid should subscribe the acts of the Roman Council against the Monothelites as representing the faith of the Church of *northern* England ; it may be well to advert for a while, then, to what this great man taught the Saxons of his day. Seeing that *he gave up his life to the great work of asserting the Divine authority of Rome*, we may be sure hi

doctrine was simply and purely that of the holy Roman Church in the seventh century. Yet it is interesting to gather up the few indications of it given us in St. Bede. We have already seen, in the heavenly vision at Meaux, the potency of our blessed Lady's intercession authenticated in a very solemn way, even by the mouth of the great Archangel. There is a story, too, connected with the battle in which the young prince Elfwyn was slain, according to Wilfrid's prediction, wherein we are told of a chained prisoner, whose chains miraculously fell off at a certain hour every day, namely, the hour of tierce, which was then the ordinary time for mass; and it was found that his brother, a priest, believing him dead, did actually say mass for the repose of his soul daily at that hour; and universal belief coupled the two things. Looking at it simply as something to which men gave credence, whether fact or not, the story shews that the practice of saying mass *with a particular intention*, was common in the Saxon Church of that age; and that so great was the reverence for the Blessed Sacrifice, that men readily believed in miraculous consequences following. But there is a narrative of the year 696, when Wilfrid was acting as bishop of Lichfield, which belongs to Wilfrid's own diocese, and throws light on some interesting and debated questions, which almost all serious persons must have turned their minds to more or less, as relating to the fortunes of their own souls, and what doing or suffering may yet lie before them. We will give the story in St. Bede's own words, again putting it forward as, whether fact or not, something undoubtedly *historical* because it was believed, and so *historically* testifying to the belief the men of Wilfrid's diocese had about such matters. In itself, and as coming from St. Bede, some,

perhaps, will get solemn thoughts from it, and so be edified.

“At this time a memorable miracle,<sup>2</sup> and like to those of former days, was wrought in Britain ; for, to the end that the living might be saved from the death of the soul, a certain person, who had been some time dead, rose again to life, and related many remarkable things he had seen ; some of which I have thought fit here briefly to take notice of. There was a master of a family in that district of the Northumbrians which is called Cuningham, who led a religious life, as did also all that belonged to him. This man fell sick, and his distemper daily increasing, being brought to extremity, he died in the beginning of the night : but in the morning early, he suddenly came to life again, and sat up ; upon which all those that sat about the body, weeping, fled away in a great fright, only his wife, who loved him best, though in a great consternation and trembling, remained with him. He, comforting her, said, ‘ Fear not, for I am now truly risen from death, and permitted again to live among men ; however, I am not to live hereafter as I was wont, but from henceforward after a very different manner.’ Then rising immediately, he repaired to the oratory of the little town, and continuing in prayer till day, immediately divided all his substance into three parts ; one whereof he gave to his wife, another to his children, and the third belonging to himself, he instantly distributed among the poor. Not long after he repaired to the monastery of Melros, which is almost enclosed by the winding of the river Twede ; and having been shaven, went into a private dwelling, which the abbot had provided, where he continued till the day of his death, in

<sup>2</sup> *Bede, v. 13. Giles’s Translation.* A modern catholic historian considers it as a trance, not as death.

such extraordinary contrition of mind and body, that though his tongue had been silent, his life declared that he had seen many things either to be dreaded or coveted, which others knew nothing of.

“Thus he related what he had seen. ‘He that led me had a shining countenance and a bright garment, and we went on silently, as I thought, towards the north-east. Walking on, we came to a vale of great breadth and depth, but of infinite length : on the left it appeared full of dreadful flames ; the other side was no less horrid for violent hail and cold snow flying in all directions. Both places were full of men’s souls, which seemed by turns to be tossed from one side to the other, as it were by a violent storm ; for when the wretches could no longer endure the excess of heat, they leaped into the middle of the cutting cold ; and finding no rest there, they leaped back again into the middle of the unquenchable flames. Now whereas an innumerable multitude of deformed spirits were thus alternately tormented far and near, as far as could be seen, without any intermission, I began to think that this perhaps might be hell, of whose intolerable flames I had often heard talk. My guide, who went before me, answered to my thought, saying, ‘Do not believe so, for this is not the hell you imagine.’

“‘When he had conducted me, much frightened with that horrid spectacle, by degrees, to the farther end, on a sudden I saw the place begin to grow dusk and filled with darkness. When I came into it, the darkness, by degrees, grew so thick, that I could see nothing besides it and the shape and garment of him that led me. As we went on through the shades of night, on a sudden there appeared before us frequent globes of black flames rising as it were out of a great pit, and falling back again

into the same. When I had been conducted thither, my leader suddenly vanished, and left me alone in the midst of darkness and this horrid vision, whilst those same globes of fire, without intermission, at one time flew up and at another fell back into the bottom of the abyss ; and I observed that all the flames, as they ascended, were full of human souls, which, like sparks flying up with smoke, were sometimes thrown on high, and again, when the vapour of the fire ceased, dropped down into the depth below. Moreover, an insufferable stench came forth with the vapours, and filled all those dark places.

“ Having stood there a long time in much dread, not knowing what to do, which way to turn, or what end I might expect, on a sudden I heard behind me the noise of a most hideous and wretched lamentation, and at the same time a loud laughing, as of a rude multitude insulting captured enemies. When that noise, growing plainer, came up to me, I observed a gang of evil spirits dragging the howling and lamenting souls of men into the midst of the darkness, whilst they themselves laughed and rejoiced. Among those men, as I could discern, there was one shorn like a clergyman, a layman, and a woman. The evil spirits that dragged them went down into the midst of the burning pit ; and as they went down deeper, I could no longer distinguish between the lamentation of the men and the laughing of the devils, yet I still had a confused sound in my ears. In the meantime, some of the dark spirits ascended from that flaming abyss, and running forward, beset me on all sides, and much perplexed me with their glaring eyes and the stinking fire which proceeded from their mouths and nostrils ; and threatened to lay hold on me with burning tongs, which they had in their hands, yet they

durst not touch me, though they frightened me. Being thus on all sides enclosed with enemies and darkness, and looking about on every side for assistance, there appeared behind me, on the way that I came, as it were, the brightness of a star shining amidst the darkness ; which increased by degrees, and came rapidly towards me : when it drew near, all those evil spirits that sought to carry me away with their tongs, dispersed and fled.

“ He, whose approach put them to flight, was the same that had led me before ; who, then turning towards the right, began to lead me, as it were, towards the south-east, and having soon brought me out of the darkness, conducted me into an atmosphere of clear light. While he thus led me in open light, I saw a vast wall before us, the length and height of which, in every direction, seemed to be altogether boundless. I began to wonder why we went up to the wall, seeing no door, window, or path through it. When we came to the wall, we were presently, I know not by what means, on the top of it, and within it was a vast and delightful field, so full of fragrant flowers that the odour of its delightful sweetness immediately dispelled the stink of the dark furnace, which had pierced me through and through. So great was the light in this place, that it seemed to exceed the brightness of the day, or the sun in its meridian height. In this field were innumerable assemblies of men in white, and many companies seated together rejoicing. As he led me through the midst of these happy inhabitants, I began to think that this might, perhaps, be the kingdom of heaven, of which I had often heard so much. He answered to my thought, saying, ‘ This is not the kingdom of heaven, as you imagine.’

“ When we had passed those mansions of blessed souls and gone farther on, I discovered before me a much more

beautiful light, and therein heard sweet voices of persons singing, and so wonderful a fragrancy proceeded from the place, that the other which I had before thought most delicious, then seemed to me but very indifferent ; even as that extraordinary brightness of the flowery field, compared with this, appeared mean and inconsiderable. When I began to hope we should enter that delightful place, my guide, on a sudden, stood still ; and then turning back, led me back by the way we came.

“ ‘ When we returned to those joyful mansions of the souls in white, he said to me, ‘ Do you know what all these things are which you have seen ? ’ I answered I did not ; and then he replied, ‘ That vale you saw so dreadful for consuming flames and cutting cold, is the place in which the souls of those are tried and punished, who, delaying to confess and amend their crimes, at length have recourse to repentance at the point of death, and so depart this life ; but nevertheless because they, even at their death, confessed and repented, they shall all be received into the kingdom of heaven at the day of judgment ; but many are relieved before the day of judgment, by the prayers, alms, and fasting of the living, and more especially by masses. That fiery and stinking pit which you saw, is the mouth of hell, into which whosoever falls shall never be delivered to all eternity. This flowery place, in which you see these most beautiful young people, so bright and merry, is that into which the souls of those are received who depart the body in good works, but who are not so perfect as to deserve to be immediately admitted into the kingdom of heaven ; yet they shall all, at the day of judgment, see Christ, and partake of the joys of His kingdom ; for whoever are perfect in thought, word and deed, as soon as

they depart the body, immediately enter into the kingdom of heaven ; in the neighbourhood whereof that place is, where you heard the sound of sweet singing, with the fragrant odour and bright light. As for you, who are now to return to your body, and live among men again, if you will endeavour nicely to examine your actions, and direct your speech and behaviour in righteousness and simplicity, you shall, after death, have a place of residence among these joyful troops of blessed souls ; for when I left you for a while, it was to know how you were to be disposed of.' When he had said this to me, I much abhorred returning to my body, being delighted with the sweetness and beauty of the place I beheld, and with the company of those I saw in it. However, I durst not ask him any questions ; but in the meantime, on a sudden, I found myself alive among men.'

"Now these and other things which this man of God saw, he would not relate to slothful persons and such as lived negligently ; but only to those who, being terrified with the dread of torments, or delighted with the hopes of heavenly joys, would make use of his words to advance in piety. In the neighbourhood of his cell lived one Hemgils, a monk, eminent in the priesthood, which he honored by his good works : he is still living, and leading a solitary life in Ireland, supporting his declining age with coarse bread and cold water. He often went to that man, and asking several questions, heard of him all the particulars of what he had seen when separated from his body ; by whose relation we also came to the knowledge of those few particulars which we have briefly set down. He also related his visions to king Alfrid, a *man* most learned in all respects, and was by him so *willingly* and *attentively* heard, that at his request he *was* admitted into the monastery above mentioned, and

received the monastic tonsure ; and the said king, when he happened to be in those parts, very often went to hear him. At that time the religious and humble abbot and priest, Ethelwald, presided over the monastery, and now with worthy conduct possesses the episcopal see of the church of Lindisfarne.

“He had a more private place of residence assigned him in that monastery, where he might apply himself to the service of his Creator in continual prayer. And as that place lay on the bank of the river, he was wont often to go into the same to do penance in his body, and many times to dip quite under the water, and to continue saying psalms or prayers in the same as long as he could endure it, standing still sometimes up to the middle, and sometimes to the neck in water ; and when he went out from thence ashore, he never took off his cold and frozen garments till they grew warm and dry on his body. And when in the winter the half-broken pieces of ice were swimming about him, which he had himself broken to make room to stand or dip himself in the river, those who beheld it would say, ‘It is wonderful, brother Drithelm, [for so he was called,] that you are able to endure such violent cold ;’ he simply answered, for he was a man of much simplicity and indifferent wit, ‘I have seen greater cold.’ And when they said, ‘It is strange that you will endure such austerity ;’ he replied, ‘I have seen more austerity.’ Thus he continued, through an indefatigable desire of heavenly bliss, to subdue his aged body with daily fasting, till the day of his being called away ; and he forwarded the salvation of many by his words and example.”

We know from Holy Scripture that God has been *pleased to teach His servants by visions and dreams* : we will not leave this story of brother Drithelm stand

ing by itself. Thus a conversion to a godly life was worked in what was perhaps a trance in the seventh century ; and thus, to pass onward to the ninth, dreamed the great St. Anscar, the apostle of Scandinavia, during his noviciate at Old Corbey,—a dream which, the historian says, had great influence over his future life. In his sleep he thought he was dying, while invoking the aid of St. Peter and St. John ;<sup>3</sup>

“ And when, as it seemed to him, his soul left his body, and assumed one of far greater beauty,—one free from human imperfections,—at that moment there appeared the two just mentioned. One of them, much older than the other, with plain, silvery, yet close-set hair, with a ruddy countenance, yet serious look, with a garment white and coloured, of a low stature, he easily recognised as St. Peter. The other, much taller and younger, bearded and curly-haired, with a thin, yet smiling countenance, and in an embroidered vestment, he also intuitively knew as St. John. They placed themselves at each side of him. And his soul, as he thought, being wonderfully conducted by those Saints, proceeded, without effort, through the immense light which filled the universe, until it arrived at a place which by intuition he certainly knew to be purgatory, where his conductors left him. There he sustained many grievous things, the chief of which seemed impenetrable darkness, heavy oppression and suffocation ; and though his memory failed him as to the details of his situation, he yet remembered enough to wonder how such pain could exist. And having been tormented, as he thought, about three days,—which space, such *was the extreme severity of his suffering*, appeared to

<sup>3</sup> Dunham, ii. 207.

him a thousand years,<sup>4</sup>—the two Saints reappeared, took their stations by him, and with countenances much more joyful than before, they conducted him much more delightfully through greater splendour, without motion and without path. To use his own words, ‘I saw long ranks of Saints, some near, some in the distant ether, stretching from the east, yet looking towards it; praising Him who appeared in the east, adoring Him, some with bowed heads, others with erect countenances and open hands. And when we came to the east, behold twenty-four elders, sitting, according as it is written in the Apocalypse, on their thrones, with an ample space before them; these, also, looking reverently towards the east, uttered unspeakable praises to the Lord. And as they thus sang, the ineffable harmony and sweetness penetrated into my soul; yet, on my return to the body, I lost the impression. In that east was a wonderful splendour, a light inaccessible, dazzling, and boundless, in which was contained every lovely colour, and every delight; and all the legions of Saints who stood rejoicing around it, derived happiness from it. And this splendour was so boundless, that I could discern neither the beginning nor end. And even when I was able to look at it a little more narrowly, I could not discern the inward recesses of

<sup>4</sup> So it is related in the life of San Francesco di Geronimo, that he said to a nun somewhat impatient in sickness, that possibly her soul would be purified by it, and she would have a shorter time to stay in purgatory. Soon after her death the Saint asked another of the sisterhood how long it was since that nun had died. She answered, two days. Upon which, as if some revelation had been made to him, he cried out, *Oh le gravi pene del Purgatorio! È venuto a dolersi meco colei di non essere stata mantenuta la parola del breve patire; giacchè da più anni è tormentata in quel carcere.* De Bonis. Ristret. Storic. p. 16.

that immense glory, but the surface only ; yet could I believe Him to be present, 'on whom,' according to St. Peter, 'angels desire to look : ' for from Him proceeded that consuming brightness in which the angelic legions were clothed. He appeared to be in all, and all in Him : outwardly He surrounded all ; inwardly all were sustained and governed by Him ; above He protected them, below He upheld them. There was no sun or moon, no heaven or earth. Yet this glory was not of that species which pains and blinds ; it was, on the contrary, most agreeable to the eyes. And when I said that the elders were sitting, I might have said, they all sat in Him ; for there was nothing corporeal, but all was incorporeal, though the form was bodily, —all ineffably beautiful. The glory proceeding from Him encompassed them about like the rainbow. And when I was brought by the said Apostles before that immensity of glory, where the majesty of the Highest seemed to be, a Voice, indescribably sweet, yet awfully distinct, capable of pervading all space, said unto me, 'Depart, and when thou hast won the martyr's crown, return unto Me ! ' At these words the concourse of Saints, hitherto sweetly singing, were silent, and worshipped with subdued looks. "

On these two narratives no comment shall be made, further than to remind the reader, that God is ever with His Church ; and who shall circumscribe His ways, or limit the *fashion* of His doings ?

Some time in the year 707, an abbot was travelling on horseback, attended by a few monks, on his road from Hexham to Ripon. The old man did not sit upright on his horse, but stooped very much ; rode with evident pain, and any passer by might have told that he was paralytic. In truth, the abbot was seventy-

three years old, and the cold, and hunger, and watching of a monk's life may well go for another score of years ; so that the abbot had reason to stoop sadly as he went. Apparently, he was well known upon that road between Hexham and Ripon ; the peasants left their labor as he passed, to beg his blessing : women knelt in the mire, and lifted up their little ones, content if so be the eye of the lord abbot fell upon them, and he signed the Cross over the people as he went. Then at times the old man fell into a reverie : he was riding among the green lanes of Yorkshire, but in thought he was treading the streets of magnificent Rome. One by one he was visiting the holy places : he was kneeling now at the double tomb upon the Vatican, and then he was skirting the Prati del Popolo Romano, and through the gate to the basilica of St. Paul, and his thoughts dwelt there long ; and then outside the walls he went, scarcely lifting up his eyes to look at the blue ridge of the Latin hills, till he came to St. Sebastian's, which stands above the Catacombs ; and after that he passed onward to the Lateran, the Mother Church of all the world, the cathedral of Rome. His next pilgrimage was not long, for down the avenue of trees he could see the basilica of Holy Cross, and thinking of St. Helena, he went there too : he visited St. Laurence's also, which looks toward the Sabine hills, and then returning into the Holy City, he rested long on that hill-top where St. Mary Major's stands, for that was the church the lord abbot loved most of all ; it was his haven in the tumults of noisy Rome. So the abbot dreamed, and prayed, and dreamed again. He saw not the Yorkshire lanes ; he smelled not the golden furze on *the green commons* ; the open glade, the tangled copse, *the dewy fern, the starting deer, the pebbly stream*

the soft-voiced cushat,—he neither heard nor saw such things as these, for the lord abbot was in Rome.

The oak, the ash, the bonny ivy tree,

They flourish best at hame i' the north countrie.

But it was the cypress and the palm which the abbot saw, the black spires and the fan-like leaves mixing with many a Roman campanile. It was there that I found justice, said he, half aloud ; it is there I will go to pass the little remnant of my days, and weep for my many sins. The monks heard, but they interrupted not. So St. Wilfrid rode on, still in Rome: but in no long time he fell forward on his horse's neck ; it was another fit, a second seizure of paralysis, such as he had had at Meaux. Speechless, and without motion, he was borne to a house by his monks. Bad news fly fast ; abbots came, and priests, and monks, and they surrounded Wilfrid's bed, and prayed, and God heard their prayers, and the abbot's life was spared for a little while longer. But Wilfrid knew that St. Michael's coming would not be long delayed ; so he came to Ripon, and began to set his house in order. The lord abbot was poor in spirit, as ever Saint could be ; but the meek man, according to the promise, had inherited the earth.

Two abbots, and some brethren chosen for their faithfulness, were bidden to open the treasury, and bring out the gold, and silver, and the precious stones, and lay them before his eyes. A strange sight, surely, for a dying Saint ! but it was not to feed his eyes with pride, as Hezekiah had done when he paraded the ambassador through his treasure-house. The brethren were bidden to divide the goods into four heaps ; then the lord abbot sat up, and spake thus :<sup>5</sup> "Know, my dearest

<sup>5</sup> Eddi Steph. lix.

brethren, that it hath been some while my thought to see once more the seat of St. Peter, where my wrongs were redressed, and, God willing, to finish my life there; and I would take with me the best of these four heaps and offer it at the churches of St. Mary the Lord's Mother, and St. Paul the Apostle, for the weal of my soul. But if God should provide otherwise, (and old men's plans are oft-times frustrated,) and if the hour of my death should be beforehand with me, I charge you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, to send my gifts to those churches. Of the other three heaps, give one to the poor for the redemption of my soul; and another let the priors of Ripon and Hexham divide between them, that by gifts they may win kindness from kings and bishops; and the last do ye give as portions to those who have borne laborious company with me in my long exiles." Then the lord abbot paused to take breath, for he was weak, and his few words had wearied him, and haply a gush of affectionate memories made his heart swell, when he spoke of the companions of his exile. But he gathered up his strength again, and said, "Remember, brethren, that I appoint the priest Tatbert, who up to this day hath been my inseparable companion, prior of this monastery of Ripon, to hold my place so long as I shall live. I have made all these appointments that the archangel Michael, when he visiteth me, may find me prepared; for many tokens of my death haunt me now." Then the great bell of the convent sounded, and all the monks of Ripon entered the chapter, and the lord abbot went in to them, the feeble old man leaning on his crosier: but he could not stand to speak; therefore he sat down and addressed his beloved family: "Our most reverend brother Celin has long labored in the Lord, as prior, for our

due observance; and now will I no longer deny his wish to return to his old conversation in desert places, and to follow, as heretofore, the contemplative life for the which he thirsteth. But I admonish you, brethren, to continue the regular institute of your lives, until it please God that I come again among you: for now these two abbots, Tibba and Æbba, are come from Kenred, king of the Mercians, inviting me to confer with him, and the state of our monasteries in those parts induces me to go: and the king promises to dispose his entire life as I shall advise; but, God willing, I will return to you again. If, however, as my frequent infirmities give me reason to expect, anything else befall me, remember, that whomsoever these witnesses, sitting here, Tibba and Æbba abbots, Tatbert and Hadufrið priests, and Alufrið master, shall bring from me, ye shall constitute your abbot, and pay to him the same obedience ye have vowed to God and to me." Then the monks fell upon their knees, and they bowed their heads to the very ground, and wept bitterly; and as they wept, they promised obedience in broken words and all the brotherhood in chapter fell prostrate on the earth, and the old lord abbot blessed them, and commended them to the Lord, and then he went his way, and they saw his face no more.

Then eighteen months rolled away; and Wilfrid went about visiting and settling his many monasteries; and even if we knew of them, it would not be well to relate the sorrowful chapters wherein he presided, valediction after valediction, a mere melancholy chronicle of farewells; for, indeed, it would be too harrowing. By this time we have come to love that young boy Wilfrid that left his home, a child of thirteen, in *full armour*, as a mimic knight,—we have come to love

him for the good Saxon heart that was in him : he has done battle, like a valiant soldier that he was, for our holy mother the Church ; he has fought with the great world, and beaten it, O how manfully and thoroughly ! and we dare not wholly love the feeble, stooping abbot ; we dare not wholly love him because of the marvellous gifts that are in him, which call for reverence, and, at least, a humbler love. And like a good Saxon prince, too, did Kenred redeem his promise of putting his life at Wilfrid's disposal : for he and Offa, two kings, left the world, and went to Rome, and there received St. Peter's crown in the tonsure of humble monks.

Now our Blessed Lady, the Mother of God, appeared to bishop Egwin of Worcester in some fields by Evesham ; and the bishop built an abbey there, and the monk-kings, Kenred and Offa, endowed it richly, and pope Constantine exempted it from all exactions, "to the end that the monks serving God there, according to the Rule of St. Benedict, might pass their lives in quietness, without any disturbance : " and Egwin went to Rome with the two kings, and the pope sat in the Lateran church, and the charter of Evesham was laid before him, and the pontiff confirmed it with a ready mind. And the Register of Evesham says, "Pope Constantine being a witness of these kings' munificence, and having been informed of the wonderfully gracious visitation by which our Blessed Lady had vouchsafed to dignify the province of the Mercians, admonished the holy archbishop Bertwald to publish the great wonders of our Lord ; and for that purpose to assemble a synod of the whole kingdom, in which he should in the name of the said pope denunciate to all princes, nobles, bishops, and other ecclesiastics the confirmation which he had given to the endowments of the said monastery made by

the said kings, together with many privileges and exemptions by himself bestowed upon it, to the end, saith he, that there should be restored a congregation of monks, who should incessantly serve our Lord according to the Rule of the glorious St. Benedict, which institute as yet is rarely observed in those parts.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he enjoined him and his successors, with the assent of Egwin, bishop of that diocese, to take into their care and protection the said monastery, and in case any tyrants or oppressors should invade the rights or possessions of it, to smite them with the rod of excommunication." In truth, but a little land would have made the Evesham Benedictines rich, for the tower of St. Lawrence looks over a very Eden of fertility. So when St. Bertwald received the pope's letter he convened a synod at Alncester, on the Alne, seven miles from Evesham, where the kings of Mercia had a goodly palace; and there the primate published the matter, and [the pope's charter and the royal grants were read; and very touchingly, as to the man who had introduced the Benedictine Rule into Mercia, the archbishop turned to Wilfrid, and imposed on the old man the honorable duty of consecrating the new abbey. This was the last public act of Wilfrid's life; it was the act of a bishop. We mentioned before the reconciliation of St. Theodore and himself, then that holy communion by the Nid, and now the last thing we have to tell bespeaks kindness, peaceable thoughts, and befitting honor between St. Bertwald and himself. Whatever came of other men, Saints could not well help understanding Wilfrid at the last.

For quiet pastoral beauty the Nen is a sweet river, winding like a serpent, not in the romantic prison of a

<sup>6</sup> Worcestershire lay out of the line of Wilfrid's monasteries.

narrow woody vale, but claiming as its own a region of blythe green meadows, multitudinous churches, and full often fringes of deepest summer foliage, varying its usual border of wide sheep-spotted fields. The frowning front of Peterborough Minster looks up this smiling valley ; and to one who wanders up the stream, turning his back on the abbey, the spires of Fletton and of Stanground, and the little tower of Woodstone, many a sweet sight presents itself. When the woods of Milton give way to the hedgeless fields, the “mother church” of Caistor, where St. Kyneburga dwelt, is seen, and the churches of Water Newton, Stibbington, and Wansford come to the river’s brink ; then the low tower of Yarwell succeeds, and the beautiful spire of Nassington, hiding itself amid the poplars it so much resembles ; while through the whole reach, a beacon never missing, the tall and lordly tower of Elton on its hill-top shoots up out of the bosom of princely woods, looking down on the octagon of Fotheringay, where Queen Mary laid “her tired head upon the block ;” there to the left the interesting church of Warmington stands a little retired from the stream, while Cotterstock and Tansor stand opposite each other on the shore : and as Peterborough Minster looks up this quiet valley, so down it visible for many a mile, the fretted spire of Oundle, shooting up into the blue sky, looks like a sentinel, from every point a beautiful, indeed an exquisite thing for the eye to rest upon. Over this region, Wilfrid’s spirit once rested, and hither did he come to die ; the gates of his<sup>7</sup> monastery of Oundle,

<sup>7</sup> Bishop Patrick, and all the Peterborough antiquaries, stoutly maintain that this monastery did not belong to Wilfrid, but was a cell of Medehamstede. The truth is probably stated by Smith :—*Petrobургenses aiunt hoc monasterium Undalense semper ad se pertinuisse nec fuisse unquam Wilfridi monasterium, sed Eddius et ex eo B*

or Avondale, closed upon the care-broken abbot ; and they opened for his holy body to be borne in funeral pomp to Ripon.

There, in the peaceful seclusion of Oundle, St. Michael's visit came to the aged abbot. He spoke a few words to the brotherhood, but not many, for he was very weak. As he rode to Oundle (*equitantibus illis per viam*) he had felt the approaches of death, and he made a general confession of his whole life to Tatbert : then he summed up and named all the lands belonging to the different monasteries, and appointed St. Acca over Hexham : all this was done on horseback ; so when he entered the monastery he had nothing left to do, but to give the monks his benediction, and to die. He lay upon his bed silent and almost motionless ; night and day the chanting never ceased around, though the monks had much ado to chant, so bitterly they wept. Still the solemn chant went on, and the brethren came to the 103rd psalm, and sweetly still and solemnly they sang the words, *Emittes spiritum tuum, et creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terræ* ; and the words stirred within the abbot's soul, and the emotion tranquilly dislodged his lingering life. On his pillow lay a wicker box with the Lord's Body in it, and a glass vial with the Most Precious Blood ;<sup>8</sup> he turned his head gently on his cheek, and without a groan or even an audible sigh, he gave back his spirit to Almighty God. " In the hour of his expiration there was heard a sweet melody of birds, and clapping of their wings, as if they were flying up to Heaven, but not one bird could

aliter. *Galeus conjicit primo fuisse Wilfridi, postea ad Petroburgenses spectasse. Not. in Bed.*

<sup>8</sup> *Vimineo condens Corpus Kyriale canistro,  
Exhausit vitro vitalem digne cruorem.*

*Carm. Fridegodi.*

be seen : and the same thing happening several times during the solemn procession when his body was transported, certain devout and prudent persons then present interpreted it to be an assembly of Angels, which, according as had been promised him, were come to conduct his soul to Heaven.”<sup>9</sup>

Many were the Mercian abbots who thronged to the fair town of Oundle, when Wilfrid's death was known, in order to do honor to his blessed body. One of them, named Bucula, took off his garment and spread it on the ground, and over it they pitched a tent, and on the abbot's robe they laid St. Wilfrid's body with gentle reverence. Then the clergy put on their vestments, and sang psalms ; and as they sang, they washed the Saint's body ; and ever as they paused in singing, they heard the bird-like melody and the wafture of unseen wings above them, and they wondered, and sang on, looking one upon another, and speaking not. Over the place where the washing took place, a little cell was built, and a wooden cross erected, and many were the miracles which afterwards the Lord wrought there for the sick folk of Northampton and of Huntingdon. There they wrapped the body in a winding-sheet, and laid it in a car, and bore it all the way to Ripon, chanting as they went ; and they thought of all the abbot's life, his six and seventy years of toil and care, of hardness to himself and tender-heartedness to others ; and they thought of the six and forty years of his episcopate, and they tried to sum up all the priests and dea-

<sup>9</sup> Some make the 12th of October the day of his death ; some the 24th of April ; the latter say Matthew Westminst. confounded the last translation of his relics at Canterbury with the day of his death at Oundle.

cons he had ordained, and the churches he had consecrated, and they could not, for the number was amazing. And so they went upon their way to Ripon, Tatbert, the new abbot, going with them; and when they crossed the Ure, they laid the body in the church of St. Peter, which Wilfrid himself had consecrated. Moreover, abbot Tatbert sent one of Wilfrid's<sup>1</sup> vestments to the abbess Kynedrid, desiring her to wash it, for it was soiled with the feet of the attendants treading on it where it had trailed upon the ground: and an old nun, who had lost the use of her arm, had faith that the water wherein the vestment was washed would heal her; and either her faith, or the water, through the mercy of God, did so. Not long after, a band of exiled nobles went up the valley of the pastoral Nen, burning and pillaging for spite, and not through need; and they saw far off, on the side of the mount, the monastery of Oundle, and they came and set fire to it; but one part of the building would not burn; it was the cell where Wilfrid died: they threw dry straw upon the flames, but the straw was bidden to forego its usual nature, and instead of kindling, it put out the fire. One of the most daring of the band, beholding the cell full of dry straw, went in to set it on fire; but when he had entered, he beheld a young man in white with a golden cross in his hand, and the noble rushed out affrighted, saying, Let us depart, the angel of the Lord defends this cell. Now there was round the monastery at Oundle a great thorn hedge, and this had taken fire; but when the flames approached from one direction St. Wilfrid's cell, and from the other the wooden cross

<sup>1</sup> *Syndonem suam*, says Eddius; but the context shews the meaning given in the text to be the most probable.

where his body had been washed, they sank down like obedient things, and went out.<sup>2</sup> At Ripon, too, were signs and wonders manifold. Upon St. Wilfrid's anniversary, when deep fear of the temporal powers overshadowed the minds of the abbots, because Wilfrid, their great shield, was taken away, while they were keeping the vigil inside the church, some monks out of doors beheld a miraculous ring of white light stretched round about the monastery. But even the sight of a miracle was not cause enough to infringe holy obedience: St. Benedict, in the forty-second chapter of his Rule, enjoins silence through the night after compline has been sung: but in the morning the monks told their brethren what vision had been vouchsafed to them, and the rest were sad because they had not been cheered by it as well. But in the evening of the feast, at compline time, the abbots and monks went out into the twilight, and again the marvellous cincture appeared, rising up out of the spot where the bishop's tomb was, and clasping in its luminous embrace the whole of his dear monastery; it was rainbow-like, only without hues, but of pearly white: and the abbots and the monks understood how that the intercession of the Saints is the wall of the Divine help round about the vineyard of the Lord. *Montes in circuitu ejus, et Dominus in circuitu populi sui, ex hoc nunc et usque in sæculum.* These marvels once found faith, and where they found faith, were they not very blissful consolations? I do not say we *must* believe them, but they

<sup>2</sup> "As I rode through Oundle in April 1723, I saw there a very ancient chapel, now converted into a barn or workhouse, which I am persuaded by the great antiquity of its structure, belonged heretofore to that very monastery wherein Wilfrid, our founder, died." *Peele's Hist. Stamford*, ii. 46.

*make* me say, Magnus Dominus, et laudabilis nimis in civitate Dei nostri, in monte sancto ejus. Fundatur exultatione universæ terræ Mons Sion, latera aquilonis, civitas Regis magni.

Two hundred and fifty years St. Wilfrid's body lay at Ripon : but the ravages of the Danes were fearful there ; so, in 959, his relics were translated to Canterbury by St. Odo, who laid them under the high altar, and Lanfranc enshrined them : St. Anselm laid them at the north side of the altar ; they rest now hard by the bones of that gentle-mannered and meek-hearted prelate, Reginald Pole, the last primate of Catholic England. Si conversi in corde suo, in terra ad quam captivi ducti fuerant, egerint pœnitentiam, et deprecati Te fuerint in terra captivitatis suæ, dicentes : Peccavimus, inique fecimus, injuste egimus ; et reversi fuerint ad Te in toto corde suo, et in tota anima sua, in terra captivitatis suæ ad quam ducti sunt, adorabunt Te contra viam terræ suæ quam dedisti patribus eorum, et urbis quam elegisti, et domus quam ædificavi nomini Tuo : Tu exaudies de cælo, hoc est, de firmo habitaculo Tuo, preces eorum, et facias judicium, et dimittas populo Tuo, quamvis peccatori.

We have now traced St. Wilfrid's course through all his weary and perplexing strifes : let us add a word or two upon his life. It was one of the deep, yet startling sayings of De Rancé, that a Christian ought to buy enemies, and that their worth was their weight in gold ;<sup>3</sup> and if such be their value in the work of sanctification, how amply was Wilfrid provided with that discipline ! Yet his making so many enemies, and those so often Saints, *may* require a little explanation. We do not at all

<sup>3</sup> Un Chrétien devrait acheter des ennemis au poids de l'or.

mean to say that Wilfrid may not have received, in humbling compensation for his great gifts, an irritability of temper, and something of an unamiable pertinacity; it may have been so. But, without any such supposition, the place he filled, and the work he did, do of themselves sufficiently account for this painful phenomenon in his biography. True it was, that St. Theodore had to retrieve the honor of Rome in the south, just as Wilfrid had to do so in the north. But Theodore had only to confront remissness, dissoluteness, and the like, in reforming which he had a strong public opinion going along with him; whereas Wilfrid stood in the face of a strict and holy, albeit uncatholic, system, whose Saints had been the honored missionaries and bishops of Northumberland. In men's eyes he was experimentalizing; he was breaking down that which had obviously much good about it. Moderate men would not know what to think, what to make of his work: they could not tell where it would end; so their impulse would be to hold back, and in holding back they would get frightened. Wilfrid made no secret at all of what his work was; it was the thorough romanizing of the Northumbrian Church; and there is really something so very awful about Rome, either for good or ill, that we cannot wonder at men becoming timorous, when the hardier zeal of others drags them reluctantly into the presence of such an exciting change. All this, of course, was against Wilfrid. Then, again, when a church is not in a pure state, which the Northumbrian Church of those days was not, for it was corrupted with erastianism, she distrusts the zeal of her own sons: she has not the heart to embrace a magnificent purpose; while, at the same time, there is no the courage in her to crush it at once; so that

opposition, so to speak, works sideways ; and though it looks merely undignified to a spectator, it, nevertheless, enthralled for a time activity and zeal, and the repression is of course painful even to the most undaunted. All this, too, was against Wilfrid. Yet he fought his way through it, as men in such cases always must, by personal suffering, helped not a little by his true Yorkshire cheerfulness. But it may be said that he failed, for in the end he gave up his bishopric. The Saints never fail, yet they ever seem to fail. They fight for a principle, and that principle is embodied in certain ends ; and God's will is, that those ends should ever give way and break under them, lest they should rest in the end, forget the principle, cry victory too soon, and leave a *Divine* End incomplete. He fought for Rome ; he pledged himself in youth to Rome ; he did in public life what St. Benedict Biscop did in literature and private life, spread Roman influences ; Rome came to him in a shape he did not expect, in sufferings ; and sufferings providentially led to appeals, and appeals to fear of Rome ; he fought, not for York, but for Rome ; and so he left York where he did not find it, chained to St. Peter's chair : this was his work, divined so early as his boyish studies in the library of Lindisfarne ; and when he died at Oundle, was one tittle of it left undone ?

Eadhed has now a successor. After the lapse of so many centuries, a second bishop sits on the throne of Ripon. And is there no trace of the abbot Wilfrid ? Yes—the townsmen of his conventual city know one Sunday in the year by the name of Wilfrid Sunday. *How melancholy !* a name, not a thing, a shadow with *not enough* of cognizable substance to be reproachful to those who play with it. Miserable indeed ! the

faith that Wilfrid lives and intercedes, is it widely spread in Ripon? The truths that he taught, are they acknowledged there? The unity for which he sacrificed himself, is it prized there? Wilfrid Sunday! what do men mean, when they call the thousand and one vestiges of better times, visible in England, lingering relics of catholicism? What lingers in them or about them? What truth, what helpfulness, what holiness? If they be relics, where is their virtue? Whom have they healed? What have they wrought? When will people understand how unreal all such language is? Poetry is not catholicism, though catholicism is deeply and essentially poetical; and when a thing has become beautiful in the eyes of an antiquary it has ceased to be useful: its beauty consists in its being something which men cannot work with. A broken choir in a woody dell,—if it be sweet to the eyes, and not bitter in the thoughts,—if it soothes, but humbles not, what is it but a mischievous thing over which it were well to invoke a railroad, or any other devastating change. Let us be men, and not dreamers: one cannot dream in religion without profaning it. When men strive about the decorations of the altar, and the lights, and the rood-screen, and the credence, and the piscina, and the sedilia, and the postures here and the postures there, and the people are not first diligently instructed in the holy mysteries, or brought to realize the Presence and the Sacrifice, no less than the commemorative Sacrament,—what is it all but puerility, raised into the wretched dignity of profaneness by the awfulness of the subject-matter? Is there not already very visible mischief in the architectural pedantry displayed here and there, and the grotesque earnestness about pretty trivialities, and the stupid reverence for

the *formal* past? Altars are the playthings of nineteenth century societies, and we are taught that the Church cannot change, modify, or amplify her worship : she is, so we learn, a thing of a past century, not a life of all centuries ; and there is abusive wrangling and peevish sarcasm, while men are striving to force some favorite antiquated clothing of their own over the majestic figure of true, solid, abiding catholicism. It is downright wickedness to be going thus *a-mumming* (a buffoonery, doubtless correct enough out of some mediæval costume-book,) when we should be doing plain work for our age, and our neighbours. But *sentiment* is easier than *action*, and an embroidered frontal a prettier thing than an ill-furnished house and a spare table, yet, after all, it is not so striking : and a wan face gives more force to a sacred rite, than an accurately clipped stole, or a handsomely swelling chasuble. The world was once taught by a holy man that there was nothing merely external in Christianity ; the value of its forms consists in their being the truthful expressions of inwardly existing convictions ; and what convictions of the English poor, who come unconfessed to the Blessed Sacrifice, does all this modern ancientness of vestment and adorning express ? Children are fond of *playing at funerals* ; it is touching to see nature's fears so working at that innocent age : whereas to see grown-up children, book in hand, *playing at mass*, putting ornament before truth, suffocating the inward by the outward, bewildering the poor instead of leading them, revelling in catholic sentiment instead of offering the acceptable sacrifice of hardship and austerity, — *this is a fearful, indeed a sickening development of the peculiar iniquity of the times, a master-piece of Satan's craft.* This is not the way to become Catholic

again ; it is only a profaner kind of Protestantism than any we have seen hitherto. Austerity is the mother of beauty: only so is beauty legitimately born. A hard life—that is the impressive thing, when its secrets escape here and there, at this time and at that time, as they are sure to do, however humble and given to concealment the penitent may be. A gentle yet manly inroad into modern effeminacies, simplicity of furniture, plainness of living, largeness of alms, a mingling with the poor, something of monastic discipline in households, the self-denying observance of seasons, somewhat of seclusion, silence, and spiritual retreat:—these should come first. When they have wrought their proper miracles, then will come the beauty and the poetry of catholic ages ; and that will be soon enough for them to come. It sounds poetical when we hear of the Saint's sackcloth beneath his regal or pontifical attire : do we find it hard to be fully possessed with catholic truth when we worship in a square chapel, with sashwindows and a plastered ceiling? If it be so, what manner of catholics are we? Verily not such as wore sackcloth in times of old, and went bravely through trouble confessing Christ. While the regulated fast, and the morning meditation, and the systematic examination of conscience are irksome restraints, under which men fret and grow restive; it is dangerous, indeed, that they should be indulging in the gorgeous chancel and the dim aisle, the storied window and the chequered floor, or even the subdued and helpful excitement of the holy chant. Let us not travel too quickly on this road, though it be a very good road to be travelling, so long as it runs parallel with improved practice,—or rather *some little behind it*, so as to be safer for self-regulated penitents, which most of us seem wilfully determin

to remain. And there is yet another more excellent way of advancing the catholic cause, which the young would do well to look to who require some field for their zeal, and are turning it into the poetry of religion. What poetry more sweet, and yet withal more awfully real—indeed, hourly realized by the sensible cuttings of the very Cross—than the pursuit of Holy Virginity? What is the building of a cathedral to the consecration of a living body? What is the sacrifice of money to the oblation of an undivided heart? What are the troubles and the pains of life to the struggles of the sealed affections, struggles which come never to the surface, complaints which have no audience, sorrows which cannot ask for sympathy, and haply joys of which it is but a weak thing to say that they are not fathomable? What, O young men and maidens! what is more like an actual, protracted, life-long Crucifixion, than the preservation of Holy Virginity, while every action of your gentle lives sings, like our sweet Lady, a perpetual Magnificat?

Reader! this strife of synods, these reigns of kings, this perplexity of dates,—has it tried your kind patience, and out of the bewildering weariness of the dry crowded narrative, do you find it hard to put before your mind's eye what sort of a man St. Wilfrid was? I think you have learned to love him for all the dryness of his story, and if to love him, then I am sure you have learned so to have him in your thoughts, that you would know him again amid a multitude of Saints, and pick him out of the crowd as none other than veritable Wilfrid. Yes—you can see him, a “quick walker,” with “never a sour face,” yet withal a man given to read dry books, such as ecclesiastical canons; just as when you read Clarendon, you can see poor bishop

Wren of Norwich, though all you are told is, that he "was a crabbed man, well-versed in Greek liturgies." Eddi tells us that St. Wilfrid's special devotions were to St. Peter and St. Andrew ; and this tells us much ; for his honor of St. Peter symbolizes his great purpose, and his love of St. Andrew reveals a meditative gentleness, never forgetful of the prayer answered in his youth in the oratory at Rome. You can see the young bishop riding about Yorkshire, with his church-masons at his heels, and his precentor at his side. And then—with what deeply grateful reverence should we not sum up such a score of deeds for us unworthy Englishmen !—the trainer of St. Acca, the educator of the northern nobles, the tutor of St. Willebrord, the converter of Cedwalla, the confessor of St. Etheldreda, the adviser of St. Ethelred, the consecrator of St. Swibert, the converter of the men of Friesland and of Sussex, the finisher of the conversion of England, the restorer of catholic uniformity, the introducer of the Benedictine Rule into the north—one man was all these things, so mightily wrought the grace of God ! and that one man, cheerful and fresh-hearted ever, was a fair and beautiful Saxon youth, who stood erewhile at Chalons on the Saone, bound and stripped for death, and, through God's loving-kindness to our dear country, missed, yet hardly missed, the crown of martyrdom.

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